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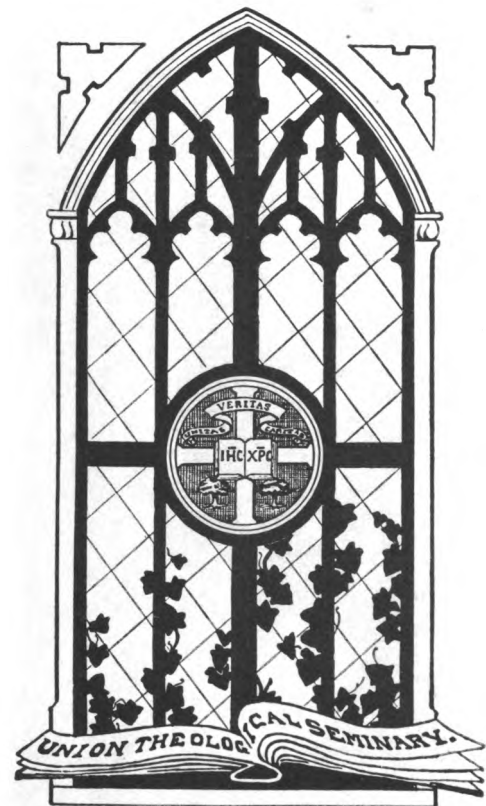


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HAND-BOOK OF HUMILITY



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HAND-BOOK
OF
HUMILITY;
OR,
THE LOVE OF SELF-CONTEMPT.

FROM THE ITALIAN OF
Father Joseph Ignatius Franchi,
SUPERIOR OF THE ORATORY, FLORENCE.

Humilem spiritu suscipiet gloria.
"Glory shall uphold the humble of spirit" (Prov. xxix. 23).

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✝ MICHAEL AUGUSTINE,
Archbishop of New York.

NEW YORK, January 17, 1889.

APPROBATION

*of His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons, from a
letter to the Translator.*

DEAR FRIEND IN CHRIST :

We gladly hail the present little volume, which, if we may trust its title, professes to initiate its readers into that science so rare in our day, and yet so much to be desired by all that would tread in the footsteps of the meek and humble Saviour ; viz., the “Love of Self-Contempt.”

The venerable author, Father Franchi, shows by the precious teachings penned for our instruction that he had himself dived deeply into the well-spring of that divine philosophy.

May his spirit, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, guide and encourage his readers in their efforts to carry out the rules of conduct he here lays down for

acquiring the precious treasure of which
he so familiarly treats!

My blessing upon your labors.

Faithfully yours in our Lord,

J. CARD. GIBBONS,

Archbishop Baltimore.

September 21, 1888.

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PREFACE.

THE first edition of this little treatise appeared without the Author's name, the humility of Father Joseph Ignatius Franchi forbidding its publication. But when, shortly after the first, the second edition was issued, it was thought advisable to append his name, as he had already gone to receive the reward of his virtues.

The present translation, the first attempt to place Father Franchi's golden maxims before the English-reading public, is from the third edition, which appeared about the year 1803. It is preceded by a short biography of the saintly author, and interspersed with such notes as seemed calculated to develop the subject more fully and prevent misconception of its meaning.

May it continue to produce in the hearts of its readers effects as salutary as heretofore, and may it contribute to the sanctification of God's elect! *Amen.*

EXTRACT FROM THE LIFE
OF
FR. JOS. IGNATIUS FRANCHI,
BY
DOMINIC PACCHI, D.D.

OSEPH IGNATIUS FRANCHI was born in Florence, of highly respectable parents, on the eve of the Feast of St. Joseph, March 18, 1712. His father, John Sebastian Franchi, was an eminent physician and a man of great prudence and uprightness of character. His mother, Maria Magdalena Comparini, was renowned for her piety; she was, in fact, a soul far advanced in perfection. The child of such parents could scarcely fail to inherit good natural qualities, and of these little Joseph gave early evidence. Gentle and modest in demeanor, frank and ingenuous in speech, he

showed no eagerness for the amusements of his age. Truly might it be said of him : "Thou hast prevented him with blessings of sweetness." *

From his sister, Maria Angelica Teresa, Prioress of St. Anne's, Florence, we learn that her young brother's earliest inclinations tended toward piety and devotion. His greatest delight was to assist at the ceremonies of Holy Church, during which his attention and gravity charmed the beholder. "He was," she says, "so patient, so gentle that I do not remember having ever heard him utter a word expressive of that impetuosity common to children of his age."

Remarkably intelligent and devoted to study, Joseph made rapid progress in grammar and rhetoric. He soon passed to the study of philosophy, in which he sustained a public thesis with high honor to himself. The solidity of his reasoning, the accuracy of his ideas, and the care he displayed in their

* Ps. xx. 4.

development won the applause of his hearers. The young student's piety, devotion, and fervor kept pace with his advancement in secular knowledge, and the careful study of the science of the saints gave increase to his early love for virtue.

If among his young companions he happened to hear an expression tending even slightly to sully the soul's purity, he trembled with horror. His exterior modesty reminded the beholder of St. Aloysius, and among his classmates he was esteemed a saint. It is from one of them, the celebrated lawyer, Mr. Bruni, that we have the above. School duties over, Joseph showed no desire for the amusements of his age, innocent though they might be. The seclusion of his own apartment was the only recreation he craved. There, in that silence and solitude so dear to him, he conceived the resolution of abandoning a world whose pursuits filled him with disgust.

Dr. Franchi, knowing his son's delicate

constitution, opposed his desire of joining the Fathers of the Mission, but gave his consent to his entrance among the Fathers of the Oratory at Florence. After the usual term of probation, the edifying novice had the happiness to receive the tonsure and Minor Orders at the hands of Mgr. Martelli, Archbishop of Florence. Having again obtained the paternal benediction, he joyfully received the habit of St. Philip, October 28, 1730, at the early age of eighteen.

A member now of the Congregation, his only aim was strictly to observe its rules. Meditation and spiritual reading were his delight, and to these he joined the earnest study of theology, the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers, and the canons of the Church. The secret workings of divine grace in his soul daily increased his love for God, his contempt of self, his vigilance over the movements of his heart, and his care to shun even the least fault. Thus did Joseph Franchi prepare for the reception of Holy Orders. He was

ordained sub-deacon, September 23, 1733; deacon, January 16, 1734; and, by express order of his superiors, he was at last raised to the dignity of the priesthood, August 17 of the same year.

Father Franchi now pursued his ecclesiastical studies with even greater ardor and fidelity, in order to become a worthy minister of the Lord. His great desire was that all his occupations, whether in the church, in the sacristy, or in the solitude of his own chamber—all things, in fact, that he did for the service of God or his neighbor—should tend, like so many lines to one centre, to the accomplishment of the duties of his vocation. Although possessed of rare ability and taste for study, both of which could be fostered by the excellent works at his command, yet he knew how to renounce his desires and subdue his ardor as soon as sacred duties, charity toward his neighbor, or the call of obedience demanded it.

During the Holy Sacrifice his soul was so

inflamed with divine love that he had to do violence to himself to repress his feelings and not to exceed the half-hour prescribed by obedience for its celebration. The Divine Office he always recited on his knees, accompanying the words with loving effusions. But evening recreation over, Father Franchi indemnified himself for the restraints of the day. Kneeling in the vestibule of the church, he gave free vent to the love that consumed him and passed long hours in prayer and contemplation.

In 1742 he was appointed confessor, and to him flocked both ecclesiastics and seculars for spiritual direction. The concourse of penitents at his confessional was so great that, to second their pious desires, he was obliged to devote to them the best part of the day, both in the forenoon and evening. For their better direction he made Moral Theology his principal study, and sought among the most renowned ascetic writers the light of which he had need. Soon after his

ordination he was named director of the Congregation, prefect of the sacristy, and archivist. The duties of this last-named post were especially onerous. At a later period the care of the novices and lay-brothers was also committed to the young father.

In 1757 Father Franchi was elected superior, an office to which, despite his remonstrances, he was six times appointed. Of the new duties now devolving on him he acquitted himself with his accustomed exactness. He regarded himself as the servant of the whole community. "Superior," said he, "means *servant*"; adding sometimes, with a gracious smile, "I am the Superior—that is, the scullion—of the Congregation. What others shrink from I must do." Many religious, not only in Florence, but also in other cities, placed themselves under his enlightened guidance. These latter he directed by letter, and especially recommended to them to aim at acquiring the love of self-contempt. Besides these souls devoted to God in the

cloister, numerous others had recourse to him for light and counsel in their spiritual necessities. But, notwithstanding these multiplied occupations, he knew how to regulate his time so well that no one could be more exact than he in the observance of even the smallest rules of his Congregation.

The chief characteristics of Father Franchi's sermons were method, clearness, and eloquence. He brought forward so many proofs to bear upon his subject that his hearers had no means of escaping were they so inclined; they were forced to acknowledge themselves both persuaded and convinced. His talent for preaching was quite remarkable, and his zeal tempered with sweetness made many compare him to St. Bernardin of Siena. To a thorough knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, he joined rare skill in their application. His sermons were always interspersed with sacred texts, also with examples from ecclesiastical history and the lives of the saints, which studies afforded him the greatest

delight. He possessed not only the gift of speaking well, but even of moving his audience to tears, as Mgr. Incontri tells us from his own experience ; consequently, his sermons were attended by immense crowds, among whom might be seen numbers of the nobility and the greatest lights of his time.

We judge of a tree by its fruits, and of a man by his words. In accordance with this principle, we must conclude that Father Franchi's chief characteristic was profound humility. Writing to Sister Pagi, one of his spiritual children, he says : " Pray for me ; I am full of pride and sin. I have sought to teach humility to many souls whose virtue fills me with confusion, to souls at whose feet I shall esteem myself only too happy to obtain a place in Paradise. What a favor will not that be to a man such as I ! What happiness ! In my early years I experienced many desires after perfection ; but through my misfortune, or, to speak more truly, through my malice, I did not turn them to good account. And

now what is the consequence? I am destitute of spirituality; I am more like a beast than a man; I grow worse daily; I lose instead of gaining as I advance in years. I am wandering further and further from the path of virtue and piety. Ah! do you not see what great reason I have to fear reprobation! May God protect you from imitating me!"

In another letter addressed to Father Joseph Mansi, of the Congregation of the Mother of God, he says:

"Pray for me, pray much, for I am *stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears*,* a rebel to the Holy Spirit, and, like a sick man in delirium, I reject the remedies offered me." Such expressions were not mere affectation in Father Franchi. They embodied his real sentiments; they sprang from the profound self-contempt that filled his soul. This disposition awoke in him a burning desire for scorn and ill-treatment, and gave birth to that calm, that peace of soul which no hu-

* Acts vii. 51.

miliation can disturb. His model was Jesus Christ humbled to the death of the cross, Jesus Christ overwhelmed by opprobrium.

For more than a whole year the good father was gratified in his longing after humiliation, for he was insulted and persecuted by some persons upon whom he had conferred many benefits. They even went so far as to declare that he was possessed with the Evil One. But no word of complaint or self-justification escaped Father Franchi's lips. He endured those malicious proceedings in silence and in perfect conformity to the Divine Will. He was once obliged in conscience to admonish a certain lady of a fault. With his accustomed sweetness and affability he administered the unpleasant remedy, and received in return a blow on the cheek. Instantly, in compliance with the Gospel precept, Father Franchi presented the other.

He was at this time Superior. As his term drew to a close and a new election approached his humility took alarm. He was frequently

seen at the feet of the fathers proclaiming his want of merit and talent, his unworthiness to direct others. His utter inability to govern would, as he alleged, give rise to grave disorders in the community and be a source of torment and disquietude to all in the house. He earnestly recommended himself to the prayers of pious souls, entreating them to implore Almighty God to permit the choice to fall not upon him, but upon some more able subject. One of his companions remarks: "Some days before the election Father Franchi seemed perfectly unnerved through the fear, or rather, through the moral certainty of being elected."

When Superior he would never permit any one to speak to him standing or uncovered. Humility was his constant attendant, and he faithfully practised what he repeatedly recommended to his subjects: "Let us be little! Let us be little! 'Love to be unknown and to be esteemed as nothing.'"* And he re-

* *Imit. Christi*, lib. i. cap. ii.

minded them sweetly but forcibly that *they ought to look upon themselves as inferior to all, and upon all others as their superiors.* At times he would exclaim: “*‘But in humility let each esteem others better than himself.’*”*

With good reason did Father Franchi insist upon the practice of humility, since, according to St. Jerome, *it is the guardian and protectress of all the other virtues.*† St. Augustine says that *it alone comprehends all that is requisite for the wise direction of a Christian*;‡ consequently Jesus Christ recommended this virtue in a most particular manner to His disciples when He said to them: “Learn of Me because I am meek, and humble of heart.”§

It was under the influence of such dispositions that Father Franchi composed the following little treatise on the love of self-contempt. To Father Mansi, however, our thanks are chiefly due, since his reiterated

* Philip. ii. 3.

† St. Jerome, Epist. ad Cœlan.

‡ S. Aug., Serm.

§ Matt. xi. 29.

persuasions triumphed over Father Franchi's repugnance to such a task, a repugnance which sprang from the sincere conviction of his own inability to execute it. It was not until Father Mansi assured him emphatically that Almighty God desired such a work and willed him to be the author that the good father yielded. He exacted a promise, however, that his name should not be in any way connected with it. "And, finally, I beg you," he wrote later to Father Mansi, in whose hands the work then was, "not to forget your promise to make no mention of my name upon the title-page. It would be too shameful, too preposterous a thing for such as I, one so puffed up with pride, to attempt to treat of the beauty and perfection of humility."

In the first edition of the work Father Franchi's request was respected; but in the second, issued at Florence in 1785, some years after his death, the author's name was published. The pious and enlightened highly esteem this little book. It fails not to pro-

duce the happiest fruits in all that make use of it in their efforts to attain religious perfection. Spiritual directors who exercise their penitents according to its maxims in that most excellent virtue, the love of self-contempt, have frequently certified to this.

A certain devout lady was most unjustly and cruelly persecuted by a member of her own household. Her confessor presented Father Franchi's little treatise to her with an injunction to peruse it attentively. A few days later she returned, saying: "Father, you will have to render a very severe account to God for having kept me so long in ignorance of Father Franchi's little book. How long ago should I not have resolved to endure cheerfully the multiplied insults I receive, had I read this book! But what I have not done in the past I am resolved to do in the future." And she kept her word.

A holy priest tells us of another lady whose life was embittered by the unworthy treatment of a licentious husband. When reduced

to despair, the little treatise fell into her hands. After an attentive perusal she invoked blessings upon its author, and thanked the Holy Spirit for having inspired him with the sentiments it contains. It is, indeed, the fruit of Father Franchi's own communications with God, a collection of his own private views and practices. The force of its reasoning and the solidity of its instructions prove him a soul deeply versed in the interior life and grounded in self-annihilation. Spotless purity accompanied his profound humility. The thought of sin filled him with horror. His soul revolted from everything opposed to modesty ; the slightest allusion to the contrary vice made him shudder. The composure of his countenance, the gravity of his words, bespoke the virginal purity of his soul; his whole demeanor breathed forth this exquisite virtue and inspired the beholder with love for it. They who knew him best, they to whom he disclosed the secrets of his angelic soul, testify to the lifelong preservation of his

baptismal innocence. He attained to this great purity by the exercise of interior and exterior mortification. Disciplines, hair-shirts, iron chains were familiar to him, and his linen was often stained with blood. He slept little, and his nourishment consisted for the most part of bread ; though, to avoid singularity, he concealed his abstinence as much as possible. Even when laboring under sickness he would allow nothing different from the common fare to be prepared for him, nor did he ever evince the least disgust for what was offered him. We need hardly say after the above that Father Franchi was most exact in observing not only the fasts and abstinence prescribed by the Church, but also those of devotion, such as the vigils of Our Lady's festivals, etc.

His clothing, of the poorest material, was often well patched. It, along with the coverlets of his bed, was frequently sacrificed to the wants of the needy. His large and valuable collection of works on spiritual and

theological subjects he had made over to the library of the Congregation, retaining only the use of them in common with his brethren. His revenues were distributed to the poor, to prisoners, and to all who had suffered reverse of fortune ; and he conscientiously indemnified the Congregation whenever he feared that he himself, or any one on his account, had been an occasion of superfluous expense to it. His zeal led him wherever there was a prospect of preventing sin or scandal, and his reprimands were always given with sweetness and gentleness. "It is not necessary," he used to say, "for the Congregation to count many members, but it is of the utmost importance that it should be fervent in God's service, that they who compose it should be earnest in overcoming their defects."

It gave Father Franchi real pain to see priests devoting but a few moments to their thanksgiving after Holy Mass. He used humbly to suggest to them to give at least

a quarter of an hour to communion with God after the Divine Sacrifice. One of his companions used to say, "Father Franchi is like a torch. He consumes himself, to shed around the light of good example."

The faith of this humble servant of God was lively, and his confidence in Divine Providence unbounded. Creatures he regarded only in God; consequently, in all his actions he thought but of the presence of his Divine Master, labored only for His greater glory. His soul was so thoroughly imbued with the eternal truths and the mysteries of religion that he was often seen to tremble under their powerful impression. In doubts of importance submitted to his decision he prayed and consulted the most approved authors. "There are," he said "many truths that study cannot fathom, and hence arise those differences of opinion among even the best theologians. But as for us, blind and ignorant that we are! we have need of a higher Counsellor."

Almighty God frequently exercised His faithful servant by painful aridity and spiritual darkness. But in the midst of such trials Father Franchi, like a child in the arms of its tender mother, reposed unshaken confidence in the loving care of Him that dealt the blows. Although for a certain period subject to intense headache and fainting spells, yet his heart was always at peace. Health and life were of little moment to him. Full of joy and trust in the protection of his God, he could exclaim: "But one thing have I desired of the Lord and this do I now ask, that I may become a saint." Among the maxims that regulated his conduct we find the following: "I distrust my own strength, but I confide in the *infinite goodness of God, who will shower upon me all sorts of good things.*"* His ardent love often found vent in these words of the Canticle: "My Beloved to me and I to Him."† To his confidence in God he

* Ps. xc. 14.

† Cant. ii. 16.

added that of a child in the protection of the Blessed Virgin, whom he styled his mother and his well-beloved.

The fathers, when making their retreats with him, were greatly impressed by his fervor and recollection. In the pious and moving meditations he yearly gave to his community during the novenas for Christmas and the Feast of St. Philip Neri he appeared all on fire with divine love. This was especially true of the former, his whole countenance and demeanor showing forth his tender love for the Infant Jesus. There hung in his room a beautiful picture of the Holy Family beneath which he placed every night a lighted taper. From time to time he interrupted his repose to kneel before it in holy contemplation. In the celebration of the Divine Mysteries he was obliged to use such violence to repress his ardent feelings that it seemed as if his heart would leap from his breast. Its pulsations were perceptible even through the sacred

vestments. In this he resembled his blessed father, St. Philip Neri. We shall here give some examples of his fervent love and extraordinary communications with God.

One of his spiritual children, Magdalena Piattalini, was sick, and Father Franchi went to hear her confession. What was the lady's surprise on beholding her confessor suddenly raised about six inches from the floor, where he remained immovable and in prayer for some seconds !

The following deposition was made after Father Franchi's death by another of his spiritual children, Magdalena Pagi :

"Some years ago, in 1755, I was very ill, and Father Franchi came to see me. We conversed together upon God's infinite mercy and love for His creatures. Suddenly he interrupted the conversation and exclaimed aloud : 'O my child, Divine Justice also asserts its rights ! Tell me, do you not love it ?' And rising, his countenance inflamed, his eyes fixed on heaven,

his arms extended, he remained immovable for the space of an *Ave Maria*, elevated about eighteen inches above the floor. With a loud cry he returned to consciousness and quickly left the room, weeping bitterly and exclaiming as he went: 'God is chastising us! God is chastising us!' My sister, who was in an adjoining room," continued the lady, "heard the words and ran out to see what was the matter. She was in time to catch a glimpse of Father Franchi descending the stairs, his face bathed in tears. The news of the fearful catastrophe in Lisbon, the terrible earthquake of November 4, 1755, reached us soon after. We compared notes, and found that it had occurred at the precise moment in which Father Franchi had spoken the words just quoted."

On several other remarkable occasions God enriched His servant with the spirit of prophecy and other extraordinary graces, as may be seen in his life, published for

the first time at Lucca in 1783. We shall here make mention only of the precise and oft-repeated predictions, made whilst still in health and vigor, concerning his own approaching death. As if in verification of the same, we saw him grow pale and thin and fall into frequent and prolonged swoons. Unable to leave the house he dragged himself to the church to hear confessions; and when even that short distance became too much for his declining strength, he received his penitents in the choir and oratory. The last days of his life were, on account of his weakness and fainting-spells, spent in bed. The exhaustion consequent on the loss of appetite was increased by painful and frequent vomiting; yet he was never heard to utter a word of complaint; his countenance was at all times calm and even gay. His presence of mind never forsook him. Ever equal to himself, he blessed God under every circumstance and was perfectly re-

signed to His adorable decrees. When the fathers asked him how he was, the answer came in words such as these : "I am better, better than I deserve to be."

The physicians did not judge Father Franchi's case serious. They assured the fathers on the very day he died that their patient showed no symptoms of death ; nevertheless, Father Franchi expressed a wish to make his confession that, if possible, he might receive the Holy Eucharist the next morning. The fathers visited him before retiring and, finding him able to converse as usual, left him for the night, little suspecting that they were taking a final leave of their revered Superior. The Father Confessor instructed the nurse to call him without delay upon the least change that might occur. But all his precautions were useless. About two o'clock the nurse heard his patient coughing violently. He hurried to the bedside, spoke to him, but received no answer. Startled

at the silence, he called the father by name, but the pallid lips spoke not. The spirit had flown; the loving soul was with its God.

On his pillow lay a devout picture of Jesus taken down from the cross. It had been placed within his reach the evening before. We may believe that, feeling himself suffocating from the hemorrhage that had suddenly come on, he had seized the picture in order to breathe forth his last sigh in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Thus did Father Joseph Ignatius Franchi pass from earth to heaven about two hours after midnight on Monday, February 9, 1778. He was sixty-six years old, and had spent forty-eight in the Congregation in labors of zeal and in the persevering practice of fervor and humility. His death was deeply mourned by all who knew him.

Mgr. Francis Gaëtan Incontri, Archbishop of Florence, a prelate of eminent virtue and learning, hesitated not to pro-

nounce the deceased "a saint filled with the spirit of God," and he earnestly begged for something that had belonged to him. A little volume of Thomas à Kempis that Father Franchi had always carried about him was given to the archbishop, who received it gratefully and kept it as a precious relic.

Father John Joseph de Segna, Founder of the House of Retreat of the Recollets, was long familiar with the interior spirit of Father Franchi. He wrote to a father of the Oratory: "I never knew a priest in whom shone forth with greater brilliancy humility, the keystone of the virtues, and charity, their queen."

Father Manzoni of the Oratory, of Florence, himself a man of eminent merit, esteemed Father Franchi so highly that he was accustomed to say: "I am delighted when Father Franchi is at home. I feel then as if we had St. Philip himself amongst us."

But what greatly outweighs all private testimony is the universal homage paid Father Franchi's holiness, both before and after death, by all ranks of society, and the unanimous expression of their desire for the publication of his life. The eagerness in this respect was still more increased by the wonderful favors granted through his prayers even during his lifetime. The limits of this sketch do not permit us to give them, but they may be found in his *Life*, written by Dr. Pacchi.

Immortal glory be to God who, in the person of His servant, has set before us so great a model of virtue and perfection !

May Father Franchi receive here below the honor so justly his due for having contributed by his labors, his zeal, and his wonderful humility to that same glory, to his own sanctification, and to the salvation of souls !

To conform' to the decrees of the Sover-

eign Pontiffs, we protest that we attribute only human faith to whatever is related in the preceding pages.

INVOCATIONS TO THE HOLY GHOST.

O Rex gloriæ, Domine virtutum !
Ne derelinquas nos orphanos,
Sed mitte promissum Patris in nos,
Spiritus veritatis !

O King of Glory, Lord of Virtues ! Leave us not orphans, but send upon us the promised gift of the Father, the Spirit of Truth !

O Lux beatissima !
Reple cordis intima
Tuorum Fidelium.

O most Blessed Light, fill the inmost hearts of Thy Faithful !

PRAYER

TO THE DIVINE WORD INCARNATE FOR MEN.



WORD made Flesh ! humbly prostrate before Thee, I presume to offer Thee this little work whose object is to excite in souls purchased by Thee the love of self-contempt, and thereby procure them the great, the inestimable virtue of humility. In making Thee this offering I confidently trust that Thou wilt not disdain my poor gift ; not only because Thy infinite goodness never refuses even the most trifling efforts of a sincere heart, but still more because this little treatise comprises many of the heavenly instructions and examples which Thou didst deign to give us during Thy sojourn upon earth—examples and instructions that breathe only humility and contempt of self. And, again, Thou wilt not despise it, since its principal aim is the contemplation of what Thou didst so earnestly perform on earth in order to ground us in that most excellent virtue whose perfect model we behold

in Thy adorable Person when, in the words of Thy prophet, we see in Thee the "opprobrium of men and the outcast of the people."

Deign, Lord, I beseech Thee, to bestow upon it abundant benedictions. Grant that they who read it may fully appreciate the great truths it contains. May they, through the outpouring of Thy grace, earnestly endeavor to put them in practice, and apply with all the ardor of their soul to the lowly exercise of the *love of self-contempt!*

And as I perceive in myself so great need of studying the truths contained herein, deign to shed upon my soul some rays of Thy divine light that, after pointing out to others the way to true humility, I may not remain miserably in my own wretched state of revolting pride; that I may not thereby forfeit the eternal happiness Thou hast promised to the humble, and which may one day be mine if I earnestly strive to acquire self-contempt. *Amen.*

INTRODUCTION.



ALTHOUGH the love of contempt is of so great importance in the service of God and the attainment of Christian perfection, yet is it truly deplorable to behold, not only among souls that pretend merely to ordinary piety, but still more among those that aim at the higher paths of spirituality, so few who really endeavor to acquire self-contempt. Its necessity is indisputable. The saints tell us that the very foundation of sanctity is true humility, and that the former may be measured by the latter.

Now the love of self-contempt is the substance and marrow of humility, the infallible mark by which a truly humble soul may be recognized. St. Philip Neri understood this. When he wished to discover the interior spirit of any one he simply

tested his humility. He offered the person in question some marks of contempt, and if he found him proof against this touchstone, he at once concluded that the spirit of God was there. Again, the first essential step prescribed by Jesus Christ to all that wish to follow Him is abnegation and hatred of self; and as all Christians by their baptismal vows are bound to follow Christ, He addresses to all without exception the formal command: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."*

But we cannot fulfil this precept without crushing pride and self-love. This we shall never be able to accomplish without the aid of a contrary love, that of self-contempt. Experience, alas! shows how few, even among those that profess piety and the interior life, labor to acquire this love. When exposed to occasions of enduring injuries, instead of receiving them joyfully

* Luke ix. 23.

and profiting by them, they allow expressions of pride and anger to escape. What were intended as aids to their spiritual advancement, they themselves turn into obstacles. This disorder arises from two causes: the first, that we are not thoroughly convinced that we deserve contempt, or, if we do believe it, we do not fully comprehend the signification of the word *contempt*, or reflect not upon the full force of the expression, *deserving of contempt*; the second springs from our ignorance of the motives that should incline us to love contempt; consequently, we do not adopt the means necessary to acquire its love. We neglect to study the art that would help us to surmount pride, our most cruel enemy. This art is no other than the acquiring of that true and solid interior spirit which is naught else than the love of one's own abjection.

The foregoing reflections induced a certain priest (who, though himself wanting in

every virtue, is despite his unworthiness a son of that passionate lover of humility, St. Philip Neri) to treat this important matter, to present it in its proper light, to develop in its smallest details whatever may facilitate its practice, and to offer the fruit of his labor to souls who sigh for God alone, and who should, on that account, devote themselves all the more earnestly to the exercise of profound humility. He trusts that all Christians who aim at a life conformable to their faith will profit by this little treatise.

The following is the method pursued throughout the work, one that the author deems most conducive to the end proposed, namely, the ready practice of the love of self-contempt.

In the first place he lays down as a fundamental maxim that all should feel convinced that they deserve contempt. Without such a conviction it would be difficult, not to say impossible, to make progress in the way

of humility ; therefore, he develops in detail those considerations that render every man in a certain sense contemptible. Next follows a series of articles presenting the various species of contempt that flow as so many consequences from the general principle : *We are all deserving of contempt.* These consequences the majority of even devout souls do not perceive, either from lack of interior light or from want of reflection. Their whole life is, on this account, aimless and hollow ; since, as St. Thomas teaches, "Practice has for its object only particular acts."*

The love of contempt is then considered both in general and in particular, in order to show forth its necessity for all that seek to serve God. To lead more surely to its attainment, the author presents briefly its super-excellent advantages ; thence he passes to the essential part of the undertaking, the practice ; and, commencing with

* Qq. in Prolog.

the least difficult, he lays down in order the various acts that will enkindle this love in the heart and keep it alive. These acts are reduced to three, which are highly important and very efficacious to render the practice more easy.

The author next exhorts generous souls to undertake this exercise with courage and a determined resolution to succeed. Lastly, he sets forth in a supplement the unhappy state of those that despise their neighbor. He exhorts them to hasten from the number of those that despise to the more fortunate ranks of the despised who love their abjection.


TREATISE

ON THE

LOVE OF SELF-CONTEMPT.

ARTICLE FIRST.

A FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH, THE BASIS OF THIS
TREATISE.

VERY Christian should believe himself deserving of contempt. All that possess the spirit of Christian humility will readily perceive and freely acknowledge themselves deserving of contempt. In making such an avowal they but render homage to truth, certain, incontestable, and divine ; hence, it may perhaps be thought useless to lay down as a fundamental principle, that every creature is deserving of contempt.

But as many persons into whose hands this

little book may fall have not yet attained the possession of the beautiful virtue of humility, a virtue so difficult to acquire ; and as by our ministry we are debtors to all, to the weak and to beginners, it has appeared good to us—especially in regard to the latter, whose number is so great—to lay down as the foundation of our argument that *every Christian can and ought to judge himself deserving of contempt.*

And, in truth, how can they that cast a glance upon these pages be of good-will and eager to become humble (dispositions which we must suppose in them) if they refuse to look upon themselves as sinners and nothingness? Almighty God Himself, by St. Paul, teaches us these two great truths : “If any man thinks himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”* And what right, what claim to esteem and honor can nothingness have? In spite of our pride and vanity, we ourselves must bear witness to

* Gal. vi. 3.

this truth. A hundred years ago there was in us no presumption, no arrogance, no craving after honor. Though in the eyes of all creatures we were so contemptible, so abject, that they preferred the vilest insect on the earth to us, yet we dreamed not of taking offence at their choice. We should not have taken it ill if all men had concerted to load us with injuries. And why? Because we were nothingness, and nothingness is susceptible neither of honor, nor wrong, nor injury; nothing is more natural than to make no account of it. And yet the Holy Spirit, who cannot deceive, assures us that we are still nothingness. If St. Paul, who was incalculably more excellent than we, immeasurably richer in grace and solid goods—if St. Paul, in the splendor of supernatural light, frankly acknowledges himself nothing, “I have no way come short of them that are above measure Apostles, although I be nothing,”* ought we not to look upon ourselves as nothing? Shall we think

* 2 Cor. xii. 11.

to surpass in excellence the great Apostle of the Gentiles? Would not this be diabolical arrogance? When St. Francis de Sales was apprised of Pope Clement VIII.'s intention to raise him to the episcopacy, the thought of his own nothingness drew from him torrents of tears. He begged the Blessed Virgin that, if he were to turn out an unworthy bishop, to obtain from her Son that he might be struck dumb when undergoing his examination before the Holy Father.

We cannot, however, deny that we have received certain gifts from God. But this knowledge we ought to receive as we do all other revealed truths, as we receive all other mysteries of our holy Faith, feeling assured at the same time that our essence, our inheritance, all that properly belongs to us, is nothingness. Now, a man's merit must be estimated by what belongs to him, by what the eyes of God can discern as truly belonging to him, for God's judgment cannot err.*

* Let us remark that the author here alludes to the

Let us, then, acknowledge with St. Paul and all true servants of God that we are nothing, *nihil sum* ; that the state of abjection is ours by right ; and that we ought to remain willingly in the condition in which we were for

merit a man possesses in himself. He makes no reference to the esteem in which the gifts of God, both natural and supernatural, displayed in him should ever be held, nor to the merit that may be acquired by the help of grace. Humility does not exact forgetfulness or disesteem of what God has given us ; it rather obliges us to recognize such gifts as coming from Him. All should be referred to His glory, nothing retained for self. This the Apostle teaches in the words : " What hast thou that thou hast not received ? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it ? " (1 Cor. iv. 7). We are obliged to esteem and love our neighbor, not for his own sake alone, but for God's ; therefore, whatever the author may say concerning a man's title to contempt, no one has a right to despise his neighbor. Beholding in him the gifts of God, we ought to love and esteem him without pausing to scan individual defects. This, the author frequently observes, especially in Article VI., in Means VII., and in the Supplement. The express object of this last, the Supplement, is to enlighten and convert those that might be tempted to despise their neighbor.

ages preceding our creation. What was that condition? It was a condition of deep humiliation, in which every species of honor was far removed from us, contempt our only inheritance. Here we have the first consideration that covers us with confusion, that proves us worthy of naught but disesteem.

But all that we have hitherto said is of little account compared with the principal reason for our being despised, and that is, our own sinfulness.

Sin is an evil infinitely below nothingness ; consequently, he that is worthy of contempt because he is a vile nothing is still more worthy of it inasmuch as he is a vile sinner. This is precisely our deplorable condition. Our Lord declares to us in several places of Holy Scripture that we were generated in the darkness of sin ; that we are children of wrath, children of hell, by reason of our nature's tending to sin ; and that we offend the God of infinite goodness and majesty in manifold ways. We thereby become guilty of an enor-

mous crime, a crime whose heinousness far surpasses our understanding. In consequence of this the Holy Spirit teaches us by the voice of the Church to declare aloud in our most solemn prayers that we are sinners. We are taught to petition publicly that the most august Sacrifice of the Mass may become profitable to *us sinners* ; again, before approaching the Holy Table we protest in the face of heaven and earth that we have grievously sinned in thought, in word, and in deed ; and lastly, we daily invoke the blessed Mother of God to pray for *us sinners*.

The above is so true that even pure and innocent souls can have no assurance of exemption from stain. Without a special revelation (a very rare favor) they cannot be certain of never having committed a mortal sin ; or if such be their happiness, it is an effect of the extraordinary mercy of God. By a miracle of His grace He restrains their malice, He prevents the disorders into which their less favored fellow-creatures fall. Still, they have

not been exempted from original sin, nor from the inclination to evil consequent on it. It is also very certain that they have been guilty of numerous venial faults which make them sinners in the eyes of God. Whoever dares to assert the contrary asserts a falsehood, as the Holy Spirit teaches by the mouth of St. John : "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." *

But who would presume to reckon himself among those pure, those innocent souls that adorn the Church Militant whilst the greatest saints, whose lives are perfect in innocence, regard themselves as the vilest sinners in the world?

On the other side, God Himself assures us that we are sinners. How will he be able to discover in us one spark of good-will and poverty of spirit, if we find it difficult to believe even on His word that we are such as He says? And if laboring under this difficulty, how can we engrave His

* Epis. John 1. 8.

assertion in our heart as a fundamental truth?

If a Christian esteems himself a sinner, as indeed he is obliged to do, it necessarily follows that he must believe himself deserving of contempt and humiliation. And, in truth, what else does a man that has risen up against the infinite majesty of God, a man that has outraged the Sovereign Good, deserve? What should such a one expect but contempt and chastisements? Be not offended, pious reader, if we suppose you worthy of contempt. Endeavor, as far as you can, to excite the same sentiment in your soul.

But, above all, is it necessary to explain what is comprehended in the word *contempt*, and to draw therefrom a multitude of consequences little thought of by even pious and otherwise enlightened souls. These consequences spring from the principle, *deserving of contempt*, as so many practical truths. They lay imperative claim to the attention of every Christian. It is

an indubitable fact that the knowledge of an abstract truth, in itself difficult to be understood, ordinarily makes but little impression upon the heart. It produces but little fruit unless we carefully inquire into it, develop it, examine it in all its details, and, as St. Thomas, the Angel of the Schools, observes, apply it to the particular circumstances that form the object of man's actions. This, with the assistance of God, the source of all good, we shall endeavor to do in the following pages.

ARTICLE SECOND.

CONSEQUENCES THAT FOLLOW FROM THE
TRUTH, DESERVING OF CONTEMPT.

Sixty-six Points of Humility.

THESE consequences we shall present under sixty-six points. They may afford matter for spiritual reading at least once a month. They should be perused attentively after the recitation of the *Veni Creator* or the prayers at the beginning of the treatise. A reflection upon one of the fifty means laid down in Article Sixth for the acquisition of the love of contempt may be added to the reading, which should terminate by a fervent prayer, either of our own selection or that found at the close of this volume. Finally, we must observe that, independently of the points here laid down, there are many others that might be adduced from the truth, "Deserving of Contempt," since its object is so vast that

God alone can fathom its depths. But whoever will make a holy use of the truths here presented will certainly receive from God most powerful light, which will discover to him a region hitherto unknown. It will enable him to advance farther and farther in the knowledge of his own misery and the love of contempt.

In the first point is laid down the bond that unites the consequence to the principle, "Deserving of Contempt." It is omitted in those that follow, in order not to render our work too voluminous or to weary the reader by too frequent repetition. A little reflection will enable him to seize the connection between the two.

I. *First Truth and First Consequence.* He that deserves contempt merits not the esteem of any creature, since contempt and esteem are contraries ; one precludes, destroys the other. If for certain good reasons a man deserves to be despised, he thereby loses all right to esteem and an

honorable reputation. Neither honor nor praise nor respect is his due, and still less can he lay claim to distinctions, privileges, exemptions, or attentions.

II. He that deserves contempt merits not the love of any creature. It is not natural for us to love what we do not esteem good, goodness being the object toward which love tends; consequently, he that does not deserve to be esteemed good can deserve neither affection nor love. He must not be surprised, then, to find himself destitute of affectionate friends and well-wishers. If it should happen that one who formerly entertained for him a sincere friendship should suddenly and without apparent reason withdraw from him, he must not be astonished. He should rather believe that his friends abandon him because they have discovered him to be worthy of contempt. And even were he certain that this was not the motive of their conduct toward him, let him rest assured that Al-

mighty God, who knows so well why he is deserving of contempt, has so ordained it.

He should be persuaded that he deserves not in the future to have any communication with the wise and upright. He deserves that they should act toward him as they would toward a man attacked by some contagious disorder. He deserves that even his own family and his inferiors should refuse to associate with him, should shun his dwelling and the places he frequents; that they express disgust for whatever he has used, his clothing, his books, his furniture, his house—for everything that has ever belonged to him; that his memory, his name, his character should be looked upon as odious and insupportable, and that they should prevent one another from having anything to do with him.

III. He that deserves contempt merits not to be obeyed or served according to his tastes and inclinations, nor on his own account. He deserves that others should

do all in their power to oppose his commands. How can he that has failed, that still fails essentially in the dependence and obedience he owes to God, who is infinitely above him, aim at being obeyed by creatures equal to himself in nature? Hence it follows that, if his position places him over others, they should perseveringly strive to withdraw from his guidance in order to submit to others far inferior to him, who are hostile to him, who blame his regulations, who turn him into ridicule, and who even in his presence do just the opposite of what they know to be pleasing to him.

IV. He that deserves contempt deserves not that others should make much account of his actions or his works on science, metaphysics, or the arts. He deserves not that his apostolic labors for his neighbors' good should be recognized, that his projects should be approved, his counsels adopted. If it is discovered that certain

opinions or measures, otherwise good in themselves, originate with him, let him be prepared to see them at once despised and rejected as coming from a vile and contemptible person. In this case, however, it is to be understood that such a line of conduct entails no injury upon any one, it being a well-known maxim that the fruit is not better than the tree nor the accessory better than the principal. The mere fact of his being the author of anything, should be in itself sufficient to attract upon it contempt and derision. Crush a spider, and but little attention is paid to the web the poor little insect has exhausted itself in weaving; and so, too, with the man of whom we speak. He must be resigned when no attention is paid to the services he so delicately and affectionately renders to others, when the recipients entertain not the slightest remembrance of them.

Jesus Christ with incomparable love labored for us during thirty-three years. His

sighs and tears, His sweat and blood, His life and His whole being were exhausted to procure our salvation. What gratitude have we shown for such services? Do we estimate them at their proper value? Do we bear them in continual remembrance? Alas! the multiplied offences and outrages we have offered our Benefactor must be our only answer. It is most reasonable that our fellow-beings should treat us as we have treated our Saviour. The greatest injuries they could possibly do us would be small compared with what we deserve.

V. He that deserves contempt should not expect confidence to be reposed in him, nor that any one should speak to him heart to heart. Many considerations, such as their state of dependence upon him, the ties of relationship that bind them to him, the multiplied benefits they may have received from him, or the repeated marks of affection by which he may strive to attach them to him, might authorize another to

expect some such return. But not so with him of whom we speak. He must look for nothing of the kind. He deserves only that they whose heart and lips are closed to him, should in all confidence confer with others whose want of prudence and judgment is an admitted fact ; that they should be constantly around them, taking their advice at every turn. Far from desiring the confidence of those with whom he lives, he should rather be satisfied to be regarded as a deceiver, a false, unprincipled man, one capable of every species of crime, one with whom nothing is safe, neither goods nor secrets, business nor commissions. Let nothing temporal or spiritual be confided to his management. Let all that have every right to trust him be removed from him by the most rigorous prohibitions ; let them be cautioned against the infection, the vices which, according to some, he would not fail to communicate to them. . . . Ah ! what obligation can there be to confide in noth-

ingness which is incapable of any good, in one who in the eyes of God has so often given proofs of his ignorance, his malice, his utter incapacity for everything but evil! Nor does he deserve that they whom he loves should respond to his affection. Let the measure of his tenderness for them be that of their coldness and indifference toward him. O how deserving are we of such a humiliation, since this is precisely the way in which we meet God's love for us! Jesus is the most loving of Fathers. He has done so much, suffered so much to advance our happiness; and yet we have shown Him in return neither confidence nor love.

VI. He that deserves contempt merits not to be allowed a voice in conversation, a chance to unfold his sentiments on any subject. As soon as he opens his lips to speak let him be interrupted and contradicted even by his inferiors in age, in rank, and in learning. He does not deserve to be believed even when advancing the plain-

est truths, although it may be evident that they who affect to doubt him are actuated by the most unjust prejudice against him.

VII. He that deserves contempt merits not to receive a gracious look or word, although his own demeanor and conversation breathe but politeness toward all. He does not deserve that they with whom he lives should be pleased with his marks of friendship, his offers of service, or the gifts he may at any time out of sincere affection offer them. He has himself but too frequently refused marks of esteem and friendship to Jesus, despised, afflicted, and impoverished in the person of His poor. Let others now pay him back in the coin so justly his due. When his acquaintances, otherwise noted for their sweetness and affability, happen to perceive him at a distance, let them quickly and openly shun him if they can; or, if that is impossible, let them assume toward him a proud and angry air. Let their tone, their gestures,

their whole demeanor become rude and unbearable, in order to express their deep aversion and contempt for him.

It is but just that his nearest relatives should blush to have their connection with him known, that they should ignore the fact ; just, also, that no one should act toward him with sincerity and frankness ; just, that all with whom he has dealings should put on a cold, reserved, affected demeanor, as if they thought they did a great deal by so far restraining themselves as to maintain silence, or address him in a few short, equivocal words.

VIII. He that is deserving of contempt merits not to see any one satisfied or pleased with him, although he is extremely careful to promote the welfare of all with whom he comes in contact, and conform his own humor to theirs. He deserves, on the contrary, ever to experience the mortification of seeing those for whose interests he labors most earnestly full of disgust and bitterness,

regarding him as the cross of all with whom he lives, and openly declaring that it would be a happy thing if God would take him to Himself and thus rid the world of his presence.

IX. He that is deserving of contempt merits not that any one should place his hopes in him, for who would count upon nothingness? Who would build upon air? If the sinner is worse than nothingness, can he of whom we speak complain that no account is made of him? Let those only count upon him who hope thereby to further their own ends and advance their own interests, but who will afterward basely desert him.

He deserves not that another should salute him or return his salutation. *Let no account be made of his polite attentions.* He does not deserve that any one should look at him, testify for him the least esteem, or think of him any more than if he were dead for ages, unless, indeed, it be to mock

at him, to ridicule him. For this end let them freely recall his remembrance.

X. He that is deserving of contempt does not merit in his most important affairs to have that information given him which he has every reason to expect and demand.* He deserves, on the contrary, that the truth should be artfully disguised from him; he deserves to come to the knowledge of it only by chance, when, perhaps, the evil caused by his ignorance is past remedy and no hope remains of attaining the end he sought. Had he been advised in time, he might easily have shunned the danger and accomplished the end in view. He deserves that this should happen even when he is obliged to render an account of the affair

* Let us here recall that the author alludes to each one's personal merit. It would be an abuse to conclude from what is here said that license is given to deceive a neighbor, or that a person charged with some office may not exact certain information respecting it.

to the most distinguished persons, in whose eyes he cannot fail to appear untrue to his word, unfaithful to the trust confided in him, or at least so unskilful as to be incapable of conducting any business.

XI. He that is deserving of contempt merits not that others should keep their word to him or make good their promises, even if, relying upon them, he had staked his honor and fortune on their fidelity. Ah, how can he lay claim to the fidelity of others who has failed in the solemn promises made in Baptism and in the tribunal of penance!

XII. He that is deserving of contempt merits not that any one should credit his words and actions, although whatever his adversaries may do or say is readily believed. The words and actions of Jesus were discredited, and shall we who are nothingness, we who are sinners, aspire to greater honor? Hence it follows that such a man does not deserve to be believed in the physical ills of

which he complains. On the contrary, he deserves that his hearers should mock him to his face and demand of him services above his strength. On his not being able to perform them, let them aggravate his sufferings by loading him with bitter reproaches, sharp words, railleries, threats, and chastisements.

XIII. He that is deserving of contempt merits not that others should compassionate him in his labors, misfortunes, and trials, either because they totally ignore them, or regard them as of no account; on the contrary, he deserves that they should turn them into a new occasion of vexation and raillery, whilst toward his companions they testify a thousand marks of sympathy in trials incomparably less than his, in trials that are perhaps imaginary or brought on by their own imprudence.

Such treatment is justly due to one who has failed to compassionate Jesus Christ in His sorrows, who has even added to their

weight, who has helped by his sins to nail his Saviour to the cross, and who has struck at Him the death-blow.

XIV. He that is deserving of contempt merits not to be helped in his needs, consoled in affliction, assisted in sickness, nor protected in time of persecution. He deserves not that others should think of relieving him. Let them abandon him in his sufferings, let them seek only to increase them. If he sees that they even prefer to throw away that of which he has such need rather than bestow it upon him, let him receive this also as his due. This is what every one deserves who has so shamefully abused the love and - grace of God as to make them serve as instruments for his sins, according to the expression of the Holy Ghost: "But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins."*

XV. He that is deserving of contempt merits not to receive gratitude, not even from those upon whom he has lavished the greatest

* *Isai. xliii. 24.*

and most numerous favors. He deserves, in return for all he has done, only disdain, contempt, insults. Let him be ready to receive such treatment at the very moment in which he showers his favors. Ah! to what gratitude can he lay claim for the trifling good he may procure his neighbor, he who has proved an ingrate toward his God, to that God who has loaded him with numberless and inappreciable benefits! Ah, let us be silent, let us be silent when we reflect on this!

XVI. He that is deserving of contempt merits not to find any one willing to do him justice, even in matters palpably just. He deserves to see the wise and prudent, his friends and relatives, his inferiors and dependants, all ranged against him—not one to raise his voice in his favor. He deserves, when unreasonably accused and calumniated, to be unjustly deprived of the right to defend and exculpate himself. Let him be tried and condemned unheard; or, supposing he is heard, let his defence be contemptuously and

haughtily rejected, without his judges troubling themselves as to its reasonableness.

Who defended Jesus Christ in the calumnies invented against Him, in the unworthy treatment to which He was subjected? Who pleaded His innocence? And yet He was the Just One, the Holy One, exempt from the least defect! and we—we are capable of the most hideous sins!

The man of whom we speak deserves that his rivals, his adversaries, unjust, importunate—yes, even notoriously wicked though they may be—should gain the victory over him in spite of the injustice of their cause and the justice of his, in spite of their unfair and iniquitous proceedings. Let his enemies, the cause of all his misfortunes, be built up upon his ruin, aggrandized by his disgrace. Let the tears that he sheds over the failure of his cause be received by the jeers and laughter of the victors, who boast of their triumph and recount the plots against him.

The cruel, ignominious blow given to Jesus

at the tribunal of Caiphas, to Jesus who was innocence itself, when with God-like wisdom He spoke in testimony to the truth, teaches us that we suffer no injustice when we are not allowed to explain our motives, expose our sentiments. The Son of the Eternal Father was not permitted to raise His voice, and shall we think ourselves worthy of being heard in our own defence?

XVII. He that is deserving of contempt merits not that any one should keep his secrets. Such treatment is most just in the estimation of him who looks upon himself as nothingness. In view of the same consideration, it would even be justifiable in others to snatch from his hands or to purloin from his private drawer papers preserved by him with the most jealous care. Let them intercept his letters and his packages, break the seals, and even disclose the contents to those from whom he would most carefully guard them. Let them divulge them on every side until, at

last, he knows of no one in whom he may confide.

XVIII. He that is deserving of contempt merits not that the respect ordinarily paid to persons of his rank should be shown him. Although his position in life might lawfully call for some esteem, some mark of politeness, etc., yet, in consequence of his own individual unworthiness, he has no right to lay claim to any consideration from others. He should not even participate in the benefits dealt out to those around him. When the one charged with such distributions arrives at him and openly passes him over, let him not think that any injustice is done him. Still more, suppose certain articles intended by the donor for him and for him alone are handed over to others who have no need of them, no right to them ; suppose this is done for the sole purpose of depriving him of them, of inflicting upon him the pain and humiliation of seeing pass into other hands what he counted upon as his own ; suppose this be

done violently by tricksters, with hints injurious to his reputation, let him acknowledge before God that he deserves it. Let David's prophetic imprecation against the mountains of Gelboe, upon which Saul, the anointed of the Lord, was slain, be accomplished in him: "Ye mountains of Gelboe, let neither dew nor rain come upon you." *

Does not he who has so greatly contributed to the cruel death of Jesus, the true Anointed of the Lord, upon Mount Calvary deserve treatment similar to that of the accursed mountains of Gelboe? We should esteem ourselves unworthy of the goods we actually possess, and believe that justice and not wrong is done us when we are deprived of them. How, then, can it seem strange to us to be refused new honors and distinctions? Convinced of our misery and stung by remorse of conscience, how can we expect any return of politeness and attentions? If we are not worthy of general bene-

* 2 Kings i. 21.

fits, can we expect to participate in those special favors and advantages reserved for persons of distinction?

XIX. He that is deserving of contempt merits not, when overwhelmed by the ill-treatment of men, to find support even in God. In time of prayer, for instance, he deserves to find but darkness, desolation, and bitterness; he deserves to see the heavens as brass and God Himself deaf to the cry of his agony. Should he deem himself worthy of favors at such moments, he would clearly prove that he did not regard himself such as he ought to be in his own eyes—a man deserving of contempt.

XX. He that is deserving of contempt does not merit to have others converse with him on agreeable, consoling, or joyful topics, but that they should speak only of annoying, disgusting things quite contrary to his tastes, of things whose very remembrance is hateful to him, and that they should do this in the most disagreeable and insulting man-

ner. He deserves that they should make no difficulty about interrupting him, importuning him whilst engaged in the most important affairs; that they should break in upon his hours of study and repose, upon his sleep itself, in order to speak of the most disagreeable, the most painful subjects, though the fact of his knowing them can afford no possible remedy.

XXI. He that is deserving of contempt merits, when offering an apology or some mark of respect to another, to be treated not only ungraciously, but even rudely, receiving in return for his politeness threats, reproaches, abusive words, and cutting insults, to the infinite delight of the bystanders, who exult in his deep humiliation.

XXII. He that is deserving of contempt merits that they who praise him, whether in his presence or absence, should be immediately interrupted and the conversation turned upon other subjects, or that his faults, real or imaginary, should be

made the theme of entertainment. He merits to have his low origin, his evil deeds, long since forgotten, raked up by his enemies in order to load him anew with dishonor and disgrace.

XXIII. He that is deserving of contempt merits that they with whom he has dealings should again and again repeat to him the same things, as if he were absolutely devoid of understanding and memory, and that they should insist on his rehearsing a hundred times all that they say to him, knocking him at the same time and loading him with cutting railleries. On points appertaining to his profession, which he perfectly understands, and upon subjects with which he is familiar either by special study or from long experience, he deserves that the most notorious ignoramus should play the professor toward him, even pretending to teach him their first principles, the A B C, as we say, and boasting that he has indeed done so.

XXIV. He that is deserving of contempt merits that they should carry their audacity still further ; and, though possessed of no authority whatever over him, that they should meddle in his affairs, interfere in the most secret and delicate matters, exact of him an account of his actions, lay down the law to him, try to govern him according to their own whims ; or, as they say, try to walk over him, affecting toward him an air of superiority, and disdainfully and haughtily assuming the control of his property, his interests, his actions—yes, even of his very person.

XXV. He that deserves contempt merits that the possession of some good should be held forth to him, but only with the design of attracting him, of flattering him, and of increasing his desire for it. When, after a thousand promises, he thinks himself about to grasp the proffered prize, he deserves that it should be withdrawn before his eyes, leaving him empty-handed and

shamefully deceived. He deserves to find only thorns where he had hoped to gather roses, vile stones instead of glittering gems, contempt instead of honor; whilst the authors of his discomfiture, and they to whom they impart its details, laugh him to scorn.

XXVI. He that is deserving of contempt merits that if any one is by chance forced to do him good, he should do it with repugnance and, as it were, in spite of himself; that afterward he should never cease recalling it to him a thousand and a thousand times, reproaching him with the good he has done him, though in reality it was but a trifle. Again, let his would-be benefactor boast everywhere of the charity he has done him by raising him from the dust and placing him in the position he occupies, although by so doing he has conferred favors upon an ingrate.

XXVII. He that deserves contempt merits, when overwhelmed with the greatest afflictions, to be degraded from the rank

he once held. When his soul is dejected and his physical strength exhausted, when a thousand distressing thoughts torment, a thousand sorrows tear his heart, then let all around him, regardless of his suffering state, multiply their marks of contempt for him, crush him with their cruel treatment. Still more, let those that witness his agony take advantage of it, tread him under foot, attributing his misfortunes to his own imprudence and stupidity, or giving him to understand that they are well-deserved chastisements of secret crimes.

XXVIII. He that is deserving of contempt merits to lose the honorable posts and employments confided to him, to fall into disgrace with his Superiors, to be looked upon as a man of little judgment, a perverse, silly fellow, fitted only to spoil by his malice or incapacity everything to which he puts his hand. Thus was Jesus treated: "They have persecuted him whom thou hast smit-

ten, and they have added to the grief of my wounds." *

XXIX. He that is deserving of contempt merits to be refused even the things that belong to him ; or, if they are given to him, it should be rudely, with insulting words and bitter reproaches, so that the pain he conceives at such treatment far outweighs any satisfaction he might derive from the acquisition of the desired object. He deserves, also, that they who are justly his debtors should, when ungraciously liquidating their debt, boast that they do so only by supererogation, through compassion, through charity, etc. Should he give an alms for humanity's sake, let it be received without the least sign of gratitude, let it even be exacted as a right, as a debt paid.

XXX. He that is deserving of contempt merits that several should secretly league together to watch his every action, to find out what he does and says, with whom he

* Ps. lxxviii. 27.

treats, with what he is occupied, where he goes, where he stays, observing in their smallest details his every step, his every movement, his every glance, his every sigh ; in a word, he merits that all that concerns him should be subjected to the secret espionage of every one. Let this be done in order to supply matter for criticizing and depreciating him, for making reports in quarters in which, least of all, he would have his affairs known, and to exhibit him in the worst light to the whole world, especially to those whose good opinion he values most.

And supposing this be done not only by Superiors or others in authority, but even by his equals, his inferiors, by those that have had repeated opportunities of testing the uprightness of his dealings, let him receive it as his just desert—yes, even if he were thus treated by those that would indignantly resent any such espionage upon their own conduct. He deserves that, in order to ren-

der him still more vile and odious, they set a thousand falsehoods afloat; that others repeating them in good faith, finally excite against him those that are the objects of them. He deserves to be reputed the author of these lies and scandals, the cause of a thousand disorders.

XXXI. He that is deserving of contempt merits to have his name used in connection with the vilest undertakings, of which, however, he is utterly ignorant. When accused of such complicity and unable to prove either his own innocence or the malice of his maligners, let him thereby become an object of contempt and odium to all that know him.

XXXII. He that is deserving of contempt merits, when he least expects it, to have his most cherished projects overthrown at the moment in which they were most likely to succeed, thereby depriving him of the pleasure and satisfaction he might lawfully derive from them. He de-

serves to be unexpectedly deprived of the charges most agreeable to him, to be turned out of offices before the expiration of his term, to behold them given by preference to the very persons who have been instrumental in procuring his disgrace, and who, in spite of his remonstrances, immediately set about undoing all that he had done with so much care and labor. He deserves to have the good he does attributed to others who, though having no claims whatsoever, receive the praise, the honor, and the reward attached thereto, whilst the evil deeds of others are attributed to him ; or, at least, he is accused of having perverted the evil-doers by his bad example. He deserves that this should happen principally with respect to good or evil whose author is unknown ; though in the latter case the good is generally attributed to another, the evil to him. He deserves, when some one has badly conducted certain affairs, when they are irretrievably lost, when they are

about to cover the unskilful diplomatist with shame, that this latter should be suddenly withdrawn from his unenviable position and he himself thrust into it as the author of all the evil, to endure the confusion resulting from failure.

XXXIII. He that is deserving of contempt merits not to be allowed to act according to his own judgment and discretion or to retain the means necessary for the same. He deserves to be forcibly hindered from entering his own house, to be kept outside exposed to the inclemency of the weather. In this pitiable condition let him esteem it as his desert to hear the scoffs and jeers of the passers-by, who attribute his sad plight to his own stupidity and want of energy.

Does not he that has used his will and the other gifts received from God to revolt against Him, to outrage Him by sin, deserve that the most unheard-of measures should be resorted to in order to reduce him to absolute inaction?

XXXIV. He that deserves contempt merits to see the utter failure of undertakings prompted by the best motives, the purest intentions, thus exposing him to neglect, confusion, and humiliation, whilst the projects of others succeed perfectly and acquire for them applause, honor, and recompense.

Again, he deserves that, after having reluctantly undertaken some difficult affair upon the persuasions, the entreaties, the reiterated prayers, even the express commands of highly distinguished persons, they should be the first to turn against him, to blame and condemn him for what he has done, taxing him with presumption, temerity, stupidity ; although they themselves, by their intrigues and artifice, are the cause of all his trouble and ill-success.

XXXV. He that is deserving of contempt merits to be placed below all others, whether in employments or public assemblies ; to be unceremoniously sent to the last place,

although, according to the customary etiquette of life, his years, his services, his learning, the distinguished positions he once held, would seem to demand for him the most honorable. He deserves to see preferred to himself young men destitute of talent and experience, and this obviously to exclude him.

If the impious Barabbas was preferred to the innocent Jesus, if Jesus was placed between two thieves as more guilty than they, will not a sinner readily think himself unworthy of any but the last place, however vile, ignorant, or vicious those above him may be? Oh ! what a fitting subject is this for meditation on certain occasions !

XXXVI. He that is deserving of contempt merits, moreover, to be designedly excluded from the very employments for which he has the greatest capacity and in which he would unquestionably succeed best. And, because the occupations given him do not suit him and he does not suc-

ceed in them, he deserves to be regarded as a good-for-nothing, a burden upon the community, fit only to be the butt and laughing-stock of all.

XXXVII. He that deserves contempt merits to have the road to fortune, fame, offices, dignities, to all that can be desired in this world, barred to him, no regard being paid either to his many years of service, his high birth, or other recommendations. Let this be done openly or by secret and artful means, so that all his efforts to rise may turn only to his greater humiliation.

XXXVIII. He that deserves contempt merits, if he has had the control of others, that they whom he was once obliged to reprimand and punish should now become his Superiors. Let them humble him incessantly, punish him for even involuntary imperfections, and continually remind him, even before those whose presence is most displeasing to him, of all that was defective in his government.

XXXIX. He that is deserving of contempt merits to be told in plain words and in the most insulting manner that he is a lying knave. After having finished some business with the approbation, advice, or orders of a distinguished personage whose authority he afterward alleges in justification of what he has said or done, he deserves that this individual should adopt the opposite side, loudly deny, both in word and in writing, in public and in private, all manner of connection with him; and leave him standing alone, abandoned by those in whose support he trusted, with the infamous reputation of a liar, impostor, and knave.

XL. He that is deserving of contempt merits that his good qualities, or whatever might procure him esteem and honor, should remain unknown, ignored, or forgotten; or, if remembered, remembered only to be despised. Let his natural gifts and talents, although superior to those of many others

preferred to him, be of no account in the eyes of all around him. Let no attention be paid to his rank, his noble birth, the great deeds of his ancestors, or his immense fortune. Let his extraordinary memory and capacity, his ability and knowledge, his experience in business affairs, and the services he has rendered, both to the public and to particular individuals, be wholly forgotten, as well as his generosity, uprightness, good-heartedness, and other similar qualities.

XLI. He that is deserving of contempt merits to see others with qualities of the same stamp as his own, or even with inferior ones, vaunted, applauded, honored, consulted, advanced, loaded with riches and dignities; whilst he is forgotten, cast aside as a mere cipher, worthy neither of notice nor consideration, or else placed in such charges as are usually confided to novices only.

Now, if he looks upon himself as noth-

ingness, which in truth he really is, he should regard such treatment as his due; and if he remembers that he is a sinner, that he is something worse than nothingness, he will esteem such proceedings but trifles compared with what he justly deserves. Nay, rather will he be astonished at receiving the least mark of esteem or consideration. He will wonder that his Superiors limit themselves to ignoring his good qualities instead of loading him with injuries and opprobrium.

XLII. He that is deserving of contempt merits to pass for a fool, an imbecile whose sentiments, by a thousand roundabout ways, people try to discover merely for the sake of contradicting them and holding him up to public ridicule. He deserves that they should lay snares for him, deceive him, use him as a tool, cunningly extorting from him words which they afterward turn to his detriment.

XLIII. He that is deserving of contempt

merits to be scoffed at, ridiculed, insulted by ignominious epithets which attack his weak points and cut him to the soul. When the scoffers seek diversion let them, either in his presence or absence, make him the subject of remarks and raileries aimed at his actions and manners. Let them do this so artfully that at last he becomes the butt, the victim of all idlers, the object of all their jeers and gibes, as if he were a criminal in the pillory. Let them mock him, affectedly imitating his words, gestures, and manners with a thousand exaggerations.

XLIV. He that is deserving of contempt merits that others should imitate his writing and his seal, skilfully assuming even his form and appearance as far as is possible, for the execution of some unworthy project which covers him with infamy in the estimation of many who believe him guilty. Again, if he should publish some learned work, let them give it forth under the name of another; or, if they do attach his name to it, let it be only

after having so falsified it by erroneous opinions, weak reasoning, and faults of phraseology, as to proclaim the author an ignoramus.

XLV. He that is deserving of contempt merits that evil-minded men should make of him their puppet, their toy, using him in public as the instrument of their wicked designs and imposing upon him, without his perceiving it, the most odious and villanous *rôle*. Let them, as they say, cast dust into his eyes, that he may work out his own ruin, fall into the snare his own hands have prepared, and become conscious of his danger only when the mischief is irremediable.

XLVI. He that is deserving of contempt merits to appear vile, abject, coarse, ignoble ; without judgment, mind, education, or polish ; destitute of every good quality ; full of defects both physical and moral ; in a word, wanting in everything.

Being deservedly accounted as nothing, he merits, if he should be obliged to go

even on important business to the homes of the rich and noble, that the servants should treat him most disrespectfully as soon as he puts his foot into the house, openly laughing and jeering at him, making him wait several hours in the ante-chamber whilst they readily admit his inferiors who have arrived later than he. Let them, at last, send him away on slight and ridiculous pretexts, as if he belonged to the dregs of society. Should this be done with the sanction and approval of their master, let him feel assured that he deserves it all.

XLVII. He that is deserving of contempt merits that others should believe themselves authorized in thinking ill of him, in acting against him, being intimately persuaded that they have just motives to regard him as the worst, the most depraved person in the world.

XLVIII. He that is deserving of contempt merits to have his words, though good, or, perhaps, indifferent, interpreted unfavor-

ably. Let the same liberty be taken with his intentions—yes, even with his very thoughts. Let them, for instance, look upon his silence and patience as an acknowledgment of guilt, and upon the slightest suspicion against him as an incontestable fact. Let him be condemned upon testimony known to be false, without a chance being granted him or any one else to speak a word in his favor.

XLIX. He that is deserving of contempt merits to be judged imperfect and guilty even when he is doing his best to practise virtue. He deserves, for instance, to be considered proud and ambitious, when he is trying to be humble and detached from all that the world esteems great ; obstinate and disobedient, when he is doing all in his power to bend his will to that of others, above all, to that of his Superiors ; uncharitable, when he is trying to serve every one ; passionate and vindictive, when he returns only prayers and kind deeds for injuries ; untruthful and deceitful, when he abhors falsehood and dupli-

city ; meddling and domineering, one that aims at ruling the whole world, when in truth he is thinking but of God and himself. All this does he deserve who has ever offended Almighty God.

L. He that is deserving of contempt merits to be spoken ill of both in public and in private, in his presence and in his absence. If through human frailty he should commit a slight fault, he deserves to have it trumpeted far and near, till its echoes, prolonged and loud, reach the ears of those from whom most of all he would have it concealed.

LI. He that is deserving of contempt merits to find himself in such distress that he knows not where to turn in order to escape those who despise and censure him ; who, whether he act or rest, whether he be cheerful or sad, sociable or reserved, whether he excuse himself or silently endure their imputations, are equally ready to injure and vilify him. If he speaks, they tax him with manifest pride ; if he keeps silence, they

accuse him of secret pride ; if he humbles himself exteriorly, they attribute it to hypocrisy ; if he does not do so, they look upon him as arrogant and obstinate, and so of other things. All his actions lay him open to blame and contempt, so that he cannot determine in these constantly recurring circumstances what course to pursue or what manner of acting will entail upon him less contempt.

LII. He that is deserving of contempt merits only the most rigorous treatment, whilst others are mildly and justly dealt with. Let them command him things far above his strength, his knowledge, his ability ; and when he cannot execute them, let them treat him as self-willed, indolent, etc. For trifling neglect let them punish him more severely than the rule, the custom, or Superiors demand. If others frequently fall into more serious faults, let them be treated more leniently than he, allowance being made for their shortcomings.

LIII. He that is deserving of contempt merits that to him always, as if it were his due, the meanest, the most inconvenient things should be given; for instance, the most incommodious room, the poorest clothing, the least palatable food. Let the refuse of all fall to his share; let what others neither can nor will do be assigned to him. Let those employments be given him in which the trouble, fatigue, and humiliation far outweigh the honor and pleasure.

If the worst of everything must necessarily be given to some one, it is but just that he should be chosen as the most miserable among thousands. He, then, that acknowledges himself worthy of contempt (a judgment he should pass on none other) ought to hold for certain that the worst of everything is his by right; that it is for him to discharge the most laborious duties simply that others, who deserve not to be despised, should lead a quiet, easy life.

LIV. He that is deserving of contempt

merits that no attention should be paid to his requests or his recommendations, since they come from a person unworthy of esteem. Rather let his petitions, his letters, yes, even his cries and groans, be rejected.

Ah ! how often have we not been deaf to the voice of God, made no account of His inspirations, His cries, His most pressing solicitations ! Let us not be astonished at receiving similar treatment from men. Can he who has so often refused the just demands of God presume to expect the compassion of men ?

LV. He that is deserving of contempt merits to be reprimanded by every one and at all times in a manner sharp and vexatious. He merits that the corrections given him should be excessively long, that his censors cease not to reproach him to his face with the faults he has committed, although they be grave and considerable, although he has already detested them, expiated them by rigorous penance, and perfectly corrected them.

LVI. He that is deserving of contempt merits to have enormous crimes imputed to him, of which, however, he is perfectly innocent. He merits that through calumny he should be sentenced to the most severe penances and chastisements—for instance, to a painful imprisonment without help or relief, as has happened to some of the saints that lived in the greatest innocence. He does not deserve that the imposture, the calumny of which he is the victim should be discovered either before or after his death. Let him, in consequence, be defamed throughout the world in open conversation, in secret writings, in works published for the benefit of succeeding generations.

Such treatment he should consider an effect of the ever-adorable justice of God, who thereby avenges Himself, and in this way punishes the numberless sins he has really committed which, though hidden from man, will never cease to be known to God.

LVII. He that is deserving of contempt

merits that whatever in him might naturally procure honor, respect, esteem, recompense, or affection ; that whatever in any other person would gain in the eyes of the world similar consideration—such as advanced age, seniority, nobility, learning, great labors, and services which have procured immense advantages to many of the community—should all go for nothing when there is question of him. Let all his fine qualities, on the contrary, only increase his degradation ; and let this all happen to him by means as unexpected as they are secret and unknown, or by open persecution so artfully carried on that white is made to appear black merely because there is question of him.

LVIII. He that is deserving of contempt merits that, by violence or deceit, his enemies alienate from him his friends, his partisans, his defenders, all that are willing to oblige him or render him a service ; that they prevent the public from noticing him or doing

him good ; that they reprimand and punish all that express interest in his welfare. He deserves that, far from resenting the outrages heaped upon him, the most influential of his acquaintances, those upon whom he most relied, should approve and even authorize such treatment, so that he is unable to recur to them to exculpate him, or from them receive either help or consolation. Let him rejoice if they are, on the contrary, the most prejudiced against him, the most determined to humble him.

LIX. He that is deserving of contempt merits to be outraged, deceived, sent here and there, to have the worst reputation among distinguished persons who once esteemed him. He deserves that this should happen to him on the part of those from whom he hoped the most. He deserves to see clearly that by their smooth words, their artful pretences, they have cast him into embarrassments, made him undertake certain difficult affairs merely to deceive him in the most unworthy,

the most humiliating manner at the very time he fancied he could rely upon them. Let him become painfully conscious of the consequences of such treatment—namely, that they who were in reality his friends now turn away from him, become his enemies, and basely betray him when no longer in a position to parry the blows their perfidy levels against him or to escape the snares they have laid for him.

LX. He that is deserving of contempt merits to see himself treated worse than one of the lower animals. Let him reflect that the poor beast never offended the Creator of all things, though he himself has outraged Him repeatedly. Again, let him reflect that there is no room to fear that the beast will ever revolt against its Maker, but as for himself, there is every reason to suspect him capable of a similar attack whether on account of his past delinquencies or because, whilst in life, he bears within himself the principle, of rebellion against God, which, if

God did not resist and repress, would undoubtedly lead him to the most odious excesses.

LXI. He that is deserving of contempt merits to have misfortunes and chastisements heaped upon his head. Let even the demons conspire to decry him, to vilify him, in order to prove that his depravity must certainly be something extraordinary since it attracts upon him so signal a punishment. Let it appear that, instead of defending him, Almighty God Himself, in His sovereign justice, should manifestly concur in humbling and degrading him.

LXII. He that is deserving of contempt merits that, in proportion to his advancement in years and his labors for the public good, is the contempt in which he is held. Let him be looked upon as having become childish, without, however, any regard being paid to supplying his wants, even by those whose duty it is to do so. Let them give him childish, ridiculous occupations under the direction of

an indiscreet, violent person, who knows no other rule of government than that of his own whims and caprices, and who orders him about as if he possessed full power over him. Finally, let him become an object of annoyance and disgust to every one, even to his most intimate friends.

LXIII. He that is deserving of contempt merits that the whole world should conspire to despise him ; that even the bitterest enemies should make common cause against him, vilifying him in the most artful manner possible. Jesus Christ permitted Herod and Pilate, though enemies, to be so far reconciled as to unite in ill-treating Him. Let all this happen in such a way that it may appear as if full permission were given to every one, regardless of time, place, or circumstance, to outrage him with impunity, each working his designs against him, whether by word or action, in his presence or in his absence. Let the contempt entertained for him be ever on the increase, and come to the

knowledge of all that have ever heard or who may ever hear of him. Let this contempt extend to everything connected with him, until it is looked upon as permissible to blame him in every way, to attribute to him vices and excesses the most humiliating, the most shameful, such as are calculated to cover a man with confusion and opprobrium.

LXIV. He that is deserving of contempt merits that the sad effects of the opinion held of him should extend far and wide for his greater shame and confusion. Let his enemies put no limit to their outrages. Let them attack his reputation before the public ; let them load his soul with chagrin and anguish, his body with blows and ill-treatment of all kinds which materially affect his health ; let them attack his fortune, seize upon his goods, until at last he finds himself a beggar. Still more, not satisfied with debasing him from the honorable and brilliant position he once held, let them for his greater affliction degrade his relations, the nearest

and dearest to him. Let the sorrow of sharing his degradation with his loved ones, either directly or indirectly, be his. Let him behold them engulfed in his misery and himself powerless to help them in any way, until he knows not which afflicts him the more deeply, his own humiliation or that of those so dear to him.

LXV. He that is deserving of contempt merits that his disgrace should be irremediable ; that he should be unable to repair his honor by justifying himself, by asking pardon, or by soliciting favor ; by humbling himself profoundly, by shedding tears, or by offering full satisfaction to those that exact it ; by performing rigorous penance for his faults, by becoming altogether different from what he was, despoiling himself of the old man to clothe himself with the new, and adorning his soul by the practice of all virtues. Though another, under similar circumstances, might in a few words re-establish his reputation, yet let all things unite, as it were, to

prevent such a result for him ; let all his efforts serve even to increase his humiliation.

LXVI. He that is deserving of contempt merits that the disgrace with which he is branded should be lasting, that his humiliations should be without interruption or relaxation. Let them give him no time to breathe ; let one disgrace be quickly followed by another still more galling. Not yet recovered from a blow on one side, let him receive another from the opposite quarter. Let those around him trouble his repose, interrupt his sleep, with no other motive than to load him with new outrages.

In fine, let the humiliation of the man that deserves contempt end only with his life—nay, let it follow him beyond the grave. Let his enemies taunt him with the fate that he deserves after death, assuring him that his memory will be blotted out from the face of the earth ; or, if remembered, that it will be only to record to the end of ages his dishonor and infamy.

REFLECTION.

We see by the preceding pages, as we shall do also by those that follow, especially in the third observation of Article IV., how erroneous is the idea that men entertain on the subject of self-contempt. Owing to this error, we must not be astonished at finding them cherishing a second idea as far from the truth as the first ; namely, that they may lawfully look upon certain outrages as insupportable, that they may consider certain humiliating proceedings to which they are subjected as crying injustice. Very different would be their thoughts on this subject if convinced that, far from doing them wrong, their persecutors do but render to them their deserts, if deeply imbued with the thought that they are truly worthy of self-contempt.

How great is the error of those that on receiving some contempt exclaim sorrowfully : " Ah ! I do not deserve such treatment ! "

It was not in such words the good lay-

brother answered his Superior who, to test his humility, told him that if it were not for his want of uprightness he would give him such-and-such a charge. "O happy fault," cried the humble brother, "that leaves me alone with my God!"

Happy, a thousand times happy, are they who, enlightened from on high, are deeply penetrated with the truths we have advanced and who seriously reflect upon them! They will, by this means, arrive at self-knowledge, a disposition indispensable to progress in the spiritual life, a disposition that leads to the knowledge of God.

Having destroyed that deeply-rooted good opinion all naturally entertain of themselves, they conceive but contempt for self, they judge themselves worthy of shame and confusion, and lay in their soul the solid foundation of perfect humility; they become capable of receiving cheerfully every species of affront, since they are convinced that there is none that they do not merit; in

fine, they get possession of that disposition which makes and perfects saints, a sincere love of self-contempt. This consideration will form the subject of the remainder of this little treatise.

Besides our profound humiliation, in itself an excellent effect, the sight of so many kinds of contempt which, for reasons hidden in our own breast, we so richly deserve, will produce in our soul peace and tranquillity. We shall be neither surprised nor astonished at receiving injuries, outrages, and humiliations; on the contrary, we shall be rather astonished when allowed to live in peace.

Again, we shall be less sensible to contradictions, stronger and more courageous in the midst of painful events. Finally, the consideration of the foregoing pages will be a powerful means to attain a sublime degree of grace and glory, as we shall demonstrate in the following articles. By this means our heart will become purer, more detached from every created object, more

capable of occupying itself with the Sovereign Good alone ; and, unable to foresee by what kind of contempt we may be assailed, we shall generously resolve to embrace all, to endure all without exception.


He that is firmly convinced that he is deserving of contempt readily understands that the various kinds of outrage we have enumerated do not surpass what he merits ; that they do not even equal, nay, that they do not approach, what he deserves. He thinks still more due him, especially when he reflects upon the eternal punishments which he deserves and which are capable of afflicting his soul far more than any temporal trial could do. Of this we shall speak in Article IV. And, although he knows that God is offended by the evil deeds of his persecutors (a knowledge that may lawfully excite regret), yet, as far as he is concerned, he ought to esteem himself deserving of the multiplied afflictions heaped upon him. Let him be convinced that Almighty God

permits them in order to humble him, to punish him, employing for this end the ignorance, the weakness, the malice of men, and this by an effect of His infinite justice.

As it cannot possibly happen that a man can become the object of all the different species of contempt already mentioned, or that any one of them should be accompanied by all the humiliating circumstances cited ; it follows that the truly humble man always thinks himself treated far better than he deserves, especially when God spares him those chastisements with which He might afflict his soul. He looks upon all the contempt he receives as a mere trifle, a nothing, a draught measured out to him drop by drop from the chalice of confusion and ignominy.

ARTICLE III.

FROM THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WE DESERVE
CONTEMPT, SPRINGS THE LOVE OF
CONTEMPT.

LTHOUGH it may be very difficult for man, esteeming himself so highly, to persuade himself that he really merits contempt, yet it is incomparably more difficult for him to *love* it. By an effect of Adam's sin, he has become much weaker in his will with regard to what he ought to love than in his understanding relatively to the truth he ought to know.

Again we must observe that, as long as there is question of simply knowing that he is deserving of contempt, he is engaged merely in speculation, he comes not to the practice wherein alone is found the difficulty, the painful part of this exercise. But as soon as we speak of loving contempt we arrive at the practice, since it is the property of love to unite the heart to the object

loved. When this degree is attained the greatest obstacles, the most violent repugnances of rebel nature have been surmounted. But we must not pause here. We must, with God's assistance, put forth every effort to triumph over the hardness of the human heart and win it to love not only every species of affront and insult, but the true and inward contempt of self.

The Christian who knows by the light God gives him that he is truly worthy of contempt, ought lawfully to conclude that he is bound to love self-contempt. The following motives are capable of inspiring such a love ; whilst, at the same time, they strikingly manifest the justice of our conclusions:

Motive First.—Truth. It is the property of the children of God, the children of light, to take truth for their guide. St. Paul exhorts us to this in his epistle to the Ephesians : "Walk as children of the light."*

This it was that rejoiced the Apostle St.

* Ephes. v. 8.

John, as he declares in these words : " I have no greater grace than this, to hear that my children walk in truth." *

It is infinitely pleasing to God, who is the way, and the truth, and the life,† to see man taking truth for his guide and making it the measure of his actions and affections. Now, as it is a manifest truth that man ought to esteem himself justly entitled to contempt ; and as it is equally true that the love of contempt honors God and procures for its possessor the greatest advantages, it follows that he who desires to be guided by truth should resolve to acquire this love and model his life according to its maxims.

Motive Second.—The Order of Divine Providence. This order demands that all should love what is proper for them and conformable to their state. A wise man ought to submit to this rule. Now, if we are but nothingness, as God Himself teaches

* 3 St. John i. 4.

† St. John xiv. 6.

us, we ought to love a condition proportioned to nothingness; consequently, we ought to love contempt and humiliation, which so justly belong to nothingness. Penetrating still further by the light of this torch, we discover that shame should be the portion of nothingness on finding itself treated as something great. An unlettered peasant would blush to be treated as a king.

Motive Third.—Justice. This virtue should be incomparably dear to us, for “The Lord is just and hath loved justice.” * Justice exacts that we render to each his due. It demands that the proud be humbled and that *they that despise God shall be despised.* †

If we have been of this number—and who can say that such has not been his case at some period of his life?—it is most just that, animated by the love of contempt, we should repair by humiliation

* Ps. x. 8.

† 1 Kings ii. 30.

what we have ruined by pride, and restore to the Divine Justice that glory of which we have so audaciously robbed Him.

Let us, then, conclude that every sensible person who desires to walk in truth, who loves the good order established by God, who wishes to remain in the state proper to him, who loves what is just as well as the Divine Justice, Almighty God Himself, whom we all ought to love with all our strength; that a person who desires to render true glory to God, his Sovereign, ought to aim, as soon as he is convinced that he deserves contempt, at enkindling its love in his heart, take delight in it, behold it without discouragement, embrace it willingly—in a word, preserve it as his greatest good.

Woe to him that advances no further than the conviction of his own unworthiness, that uses not this conviction as a means to arrive at the love of self-contempt! Such a man will never acquire true evangelical humility. He may, per-

haps, possess humility of spirit, but not that of the heart, in which alone true humility essentially consists. Through his own fault he will fail to learn the great lesson left us by our Divine Lord in those short but energetic words recorded by St. Matthew : " Learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble of heart " ; * he will consequently never give to God that honor which He tells us in the Holy Scriptures He receives from humble souls : " Great is the power of God alone, and He is honored by the humble. " † The honor here alluded to consists in the profound and voluntary submission, in the entire annihilation of the creature in presence of the infinite, the terrible majesty of God, by which man pays a just tribute to his Creator and nothingness renders homage to Him who is all.

As there is question of a man who has arrogantly failed in the respect he owed to his God, the honor of that God de-

* St. Matt. xi. 29.

† Ecclus. iii. 21.

mands that the sinner should joyfully embrace contempt and humiliation that, by the cheerful and loving acceptance of what is directly opposed to his pride, he may repair the honor of Divine Justice which he dared to attack. He may at the same time verify these words of the Gospel: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled." *

Supposing it true that a man be not deserving of contempt, still ought he to be sincerely desirous of it by reason of the love he owes to his God. All know that the lover is either like unto the beloved, or love urges him to become so. "Friendship supposes friends to be equal, or renders them such if they are not so," says St. Jerome in his eulogium on the words of an ancient sage. †

Now, as our Divine Saviour is the object of our affections, and as faith teaches that whilst on earth laboring at our salvation

* St. Luke xiv. 11. † S. Hier. in cap. 7, Ezech.

He evinced inexpressible love for contempt, so far as to make it His most agreeable nourishment ; * so far as to plunge for the love of it into an abyss of confusion and outrages ; so far as to become *the reproach of men and the outcast of the people* ; † so far as to appear *the most abject of men*, ‡ or, rather, *a worm and no man*, § *the accursed of God* ; || so far as to permit it to be said of Him that *He had a devil*, ¶ as the Jews declared—shall we, too, not love it ?

How can a Christian flatter himself that he loves Jesus Christ if he shuns contempt as something to be abhorred, instead of nerving himself to love it and to embrace it voluntarily ?

To embrace it voluntarily ? Was it not this that a certain saintly archbishop did when taking possession of the see to which

* Lament. iii. 30.

† Ps. xxi. 7.

‡ Isai. liii. 3.

§ Ps. xxi. 7.

| Deut. xxi. 23.

¶ St. John viii. 48.

he had been recently transferred ? To shun the public reception awaiting him, he started at an earlier hour than that fixed upon, and on reaching his episcopal city went straight to the cathedral. Quietly entering the sacristy, he accosted the sexton whom he found there, saying that he would like to say Mass. As there was nothing in the prelate's appearance to denote his rank, the sexton replied : "Reverend Father, have you been to the archbishop's house ? I am sure there will be no difficulty about your saying Mass, but I am positively forbidden to allow any strange priest to do so without the archbishop's permission." "No," answered the stranger—"no, I have not yet been to the archbishop's house." Then with a little smile, and pulling out a written paper, he added : "But see, I am your archbishop." And thus did the holy man take possession of his new dignity long before many of his committee of reception had risen from their beds.

But if he who does not deserve to be despised would be too unlike Jesus Christ, and, consequently, devoid of love for Him—for this reason alone, that he does not love or does not aim at the love of contempt which the God-Saviour, though innocence itself, loved so much—can he who by so many titles really deserves to be despised, ever hope to become like unto Jesus if he has no love for humiliation? Such a one, both by the lowness of his origin and the deformity of his sins, already possesses too great dissimilarity with Jesus Christ; and if to this want of likeness he adds flight from contempt, how can he think that he loves his God so despised and annihilated?

Again, if instead of diminishing the first points of difference which spring from his own sins and malice; if instead of lessening them as much as possible by the corrective of a contrite and humble heart, he increases this difference, he renders it still more sensible by adding to it a new fea-

ture of dissimilarity, such as the love of his own excellence and the hatred of that contempt so justly his due—can he persuade himself that he loves Jesus Christ whom he does not seek to resemble?

O good Jesus! who for love of us was despised in this world, enlighten us with Thy light and create in us a new heart before citing us to appear at Thy terrible tribunal, to render an account of the sincerity of our love. Convict us not of want of love from the fact of our not exerting every effort to destroy the dissimilarity that exists between Thee and us. Ah! this fatal dissimilarity is the result of our pride. It might, after Thy example, be easily effaced by the sincere love of contempt and abjection.

The single fact that we are Christians should make us love contempt. The characteristic of Christianity is to be animated by the spirit of Jesus Christ, to render its disciples true followers of the God-Saviour.

St. Paul bears witness to this in express terms. He was not satisfied with being united to Jesus Christ so far as to be able to assure us that *it was not he who lived, but Jesus Christ who lived in him,** but he was inflamed with the most ardent zeal for gaining souls to God, *he exerted himself to form Jesus Christ in his spiritual children.†* To this he directed all his attention, to it tended all his efforts, his labors, and his tears. *He gloried in knowing nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified,‡* that is, Jesus Christ in the midst of torments and opprobrium. He had good reason for doing so, for *if Christians compose the body of Jesus Christ, if they are His members,§* they ought to be animated by the spirit of Jesus Christ. If they are destined to reign eternally with Jesus Christ triumphant in heaven, *they ought here upon earth to be the images of Jesus Christ and conformed to the Man-God humbled and suffering.¶* It was this spirit,

*Gal. ii. 20.

†Ib. iv. 19.

‡1 Cor. ii. 2.

§Ib. xii. 27.

¶Rom. viii. 29.

this longing after likeness to Jesus that animated a certain holy bishop's heart in the following little circumstance. Returning to his diocese after a long absence he so timed the moment of his reaching home as to arrive at midnight. This he did to escape any demonstration in his honor. What was the surprise of the servant-man when, on opening the door, he found instead of a sick-call, as he expected, the long-absent bishop. "Not a word, not a word!" whispered the bishop in answer to the servant's exclamations. "Do not disturb the reverend gentlemen." And, attended by the man, he mounted softly to his room. He entered and, startled, looked around: "What's all this, Thomas? Whose room is this?"

"Yours, my lord," answered Thomas.

"No, no! not mine, but yours"—and in answer to the man's look of consternation—"yours, at least for to-night. Turn into that fine bed and see if you can rest in it till morning, for I could not."

Thomas expostulated, but all to no purpose. The bishop would have his own way. Thomas slept that night for the first time on a bed of down, whilst the bishop divided the small hours between his arm-chair and his prie-dieu in the library.

The room had been richly furnished during his absence. Next morning the rector of the cathedral received a gentle reprimand for having allowed his room to be thus invaded, and the ladies of the parish, the real delinquents, were requested to remove every article of furniture introduced by their orders. "Christ had not whereon to rest His head," exclaimed the good bishop, "and am I not His follower?"

Now, what are the points of resemblance between man and the Divine Model? What can form the marks of this spirit in man if not contempt, humiliation, and suffering? To strengthen in our heart *that annihilation so conspicuous in the incarnate Word,* by the ignominious death to which He deigned to*

* Philip. ii. 8.

submit, is necessary, in order to form in us this perfect resemblance to Jesus Christ.*

The practice of this life of faith by which the just man lives † consists in constantly looking upon Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.‡

The hope of the true Christian is to partake in the humiliations and sufferings of Christ, in order to share afterward in His exaltation and glory.§

*This is that Divine charity which urges us to the love of Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Good, which presses us, || which obliges us to become His imitators, ¶ according to the express intention of our Lord.***

If, then, the whole life of Jesus Christ upon earth, from the first instant of His conception in the womb of Mary to the moment of His death upon the cross, was but one series

* Philip. ii. 8. † Rom. i. 17. ‡ Heb. xii. 2.

§ 1 Peter iv. 13.

| 2 Cor. v. 14.

¶ 1 John ii. 6.

** 1 Peter ii. 21.

of humiliations, one excess of sufferings, a Christian that loves ought to aspire to no other happiness than that of suffering and being despised. He ought, in spite of nature's repugnance, arm himself to walk in this way, having always in his mind and heart Jesus Christ crucified.*

It is absolutely necessary to renounce the spirit of Jesus Christ and all resemblance to Him, to renounce becoming His living image, to renounce the possession of grace and glory and God Himself, or labor to acquire, even in a small degree, the love of contempt. The more important it is for us to secure these precious goods, the more important for us to belong entirely to Jesus both upon earth and in heaven, the more strenuous should be our efforts to advance in the love of self-contempt.

From what we have hitherto said we must conclude that nothing is more frivolous than the excuse of those that, convicted of entertaining more horror than love for self-con-

* 1 Peter iv. 1.

tempt, of being most eager in the pursuit after glory and distinctions, allege in their defence that if all Christians reflected upon what our Lord has done and suffered, if they recalled all that faith teaches, they should in the time of humiliation speak differently. They should entertain very opposite sentiments. But alas! they think and speak humanly like the rest of men, and according to the dictates of reason. Good God! upon what ought a true Christian think more frequently and seriously than upon those truths that God has revealed for our salvation? We must not *look at the things that are seen*, says St. Paul;* and again, *in all things taking the shield of faith*.†

What should he contemplate more earnestly than that Blessed Saviour from whom he derives both the name he bears and the Christian life he has received, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Teacher *par excellence* whom the Eternal Father tells us *to hear*,‡ the Divine Model whom He commands us to imitate.

* 2 Cor. iv. 18.

† Eph. vi. 16.

‡ Luke ix. 35.

Ah! let us not be astonished at hearing contrary precepts from the lips of Turks, Jews, sinners, and idolaters! They are so unfortunate as to know neither Jesus Christ nor His doctrine. But the Christian to whom we allude thinks and speaks as they, although, by his baptismal engagements, he is obliged to know Jesus Christ, to imbibe His spirit, and form his life upon His maxims. If the Christian does not frequently reflect upon his obligations, if Jesus Christ and the teachings of faith are not the principal subjects of his thoughts, the chief objects of his desires, he fails in his duty, he is inexcusably guilty.

When such Christians, so-called, shall appear at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, their Sovereign Judge, they will acknowledge the truth of the above, they will be covered with confusion and pierced with grief at having neglected to become like unto Him, humbled and despised. Taken up with a thousand trifles, a thousand inutilities, ill at ease in following the low instincts of nature, they

have forgotten Jesus, the Repairer of nature, the Author of grace, the Model of the elect. They will then see what injury they have done their God. They will then see into what an abyss of woe they have cast themselves.

O Christians, Christians ! reflect seriously upon these divine truths whilst there is yet time to forward your dearest interests ! If you neglect now to render yourselves like unto Jesus, outraged and suffering, by cheerfully supporting contempt and afflictions, what excuse can you plead before Him as your Judge for having recalled so seldom the ignominy with which He was covered upon the cross ? Such thoughts were obligatory on you, and an obligation very easy to fulfil. And if each moment of life was given you by God to acquire new features of resemblance to Jesus Christ, it became for you a daily obligation to contemplate Jesus Christ, your Divine Prototype, nailed for you to the cross, despised, humbled, and forsaken.

If hitherto you have neglected this, it has been through your own fault, your own monstrous ingratitude. You, above all, whom God calls by so many secret inspirations ; you whom He so especially invites to acquire Christian perfection ; you priests, you religious, upon whom your state imposes a stricter obligation, reflect frequently on these important and divine truths. Be assured that if you do not make an oblation, a sincere sacrifice of your honor to this great God, who sacrificed His honor on the cross for you ; if you do not in some degree love contempt, you will never truly resemble Jesus Christ, you will never possess His spirit, you will remain far from the perfection to which you are called, and you will be in great danger of losing your soul.

Apply then with all your heart to so important a study, and rest not until you acquire the love of self-contempt.

Behold a summary of what we have said: If a Christian who, by no sins of his own,


deserves contempt, if he ought to love it for the reasons just enumerated, with how much more reason ought he to do so who knows that he really deserves it, and that the Divine Judge who imposes it upon him as a duty is infinitely wise and holy.

But that this love of self-contempt may be true and sincere we must not be satisfied with a mere speculative love ; we must love it practically. We must love it in all our works, in all our exercises, according to the well-known advice of St. John : *Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.** This is the principal object here proposed. We shall treat it more fully in the following article.

* 1 St. John iii. 18.

ARTICLE IV.

THE LOVE OF SELF-CONTEMPT CONSIDERED IN PARTICULAR.

HE love of self-contempt ought not to be limited to contempt in general. It should extend to the different species of humiliation enumerated in Article II. and to all others.

To avoid error in this important and delicate matter, we shall offer a few observations calculated to throw light upon its teachings and regulate their practice.

I. The love of contempt should be founded on the will of God, the source of all good, of all holiness ; consequently, upon the union, the relation, of all created objects with God Himself. He alone should be to us the most lovely, the most cherished of all. Thus we shall accomplish perfectly the great commandment, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.**

* Deut. vi. 5.

Hence we are bound to love those humiliations which we so well deserve, and which God is pleased that we should love—those humiliations which, in proportion to our love for them, procure on the one side the glory of God, and on the other are so powerful in detaching us from self and the false goods of this world, and in raising us to God. A young English lady, whilst residing in Paris, was converted from Protestantism to the Catholic faith. Cast off by family and friends, she found herself in a strange country wholly destitute of means. The good old Jesuit father who had received her into the Church interested himself to procure her assistance. This was for her haughty, unsubdued spirit a deep humiliation, but it was the price Almighty God demanded for the abundant graces he held in store for her. In obedience to her director, she presented herself at the house of a noble lady, expecting to receive considerable help. To her infinite disgust, a few paltry

coins were laid in her hand. "What!" she mentally exclaimed, "am I a beggar?"—and her first impulse was to cast the money on the ground. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," whispered an interior voice. "Since Jesus Christ became poor for me, shall not I embrace poverty and contempt for love of Him?"—and smiling she gratefully acknowledged the alms. This act was for her a giant stride in the way of perfection.

But although humiliations be our due, yet if we see not the good pleasure of God in them, if they are not such as will increase the divine glory and unite us to the Supreme Good, to that Infinite Being by whom we have been created and redeemed, they do not deserve the smallest affection of our heart, they form not the subject of which this article treats.

II. In the first kind of humiliations, which we can and which we ought holily to love and to which alone we here refer, are comprehended those which have been enumer-

ated and developed in the sixty-six points of Article II., as well as some others of a similar nature. They are all calculated to detach us from earth and self, to lead us to God, and to render us worthy of procuring His glory.

The second kind of humiliations embraces many others which, instead of uniting us to God, would, to our great detriment, remove us from Him. Now, with regard to these, God, who is infinitely good and desirous of our welfare, is pleased indeed to have us humbly acknowledge that we deserve them, but He does not wish us to love them. On the contrary, He wishes us carefully to shun them and confidently to invoke His aid to obtain our deliverance from them.

III. We shall now enumerate the principal of these humiliations. They are without comparison much more frightful than those mentioned in Article II. But instead of loving them we should shun them with the greatest horror.

He that has ever sinned merits neither

actual nor sanctifying grace, neither the light of the Holy Spirit nor the least good thought. He merits neither pardon for his sins, nor that most excellent gift of final perseverance, nor the possession of the Christian virtues, nor the gift of prayer, nor that God should hear him when he calls upon Him. He merits neither paradise nor purgatory, for although the latter is a most cruel prison, all its captives are of the highest spiritual rank and nobility ; all being vanquishers of hell, children and heirs of God destined to reign with Him for ever. The purifying and refining flames will render them all the more agreeable to the eyes of their Divine Spouse. Now, how could a man truly humble, a man that looks upon himself as deserving of contempt, dare to think himself worthy to be admitted to the society of persons so illustrious ?

He that has ever sinned merits that God should leave him in his spiritual miseries, in the infection of sin, a prey to his own pas-

sions and the fury of the demons. If such a one has had the happiness of regaining the grace of God, yet he still deserves that God should allow him to fall into mortal sin, and thence precipitate himself into the greatest excesses without restraint or remorse, stifling faith and hope in the most terrible abandonment of God. In fine, he merits an unhappy death and the torments of hell.

Let the Christian reflect seriously upon these truths. Let him conceive such an idea of himself as to make him sink below nothingness itself. Let him acknowledge that he is worthy of no good, either in this life or the next; but that, on the contrary, he deserves infinite contempt and the most horrible punishments. Let him make use of such thoughts to practise interior self-annihilation, and this so perfectly as to prevent his ever raising his head again. Ah! how happy would a man be to arrive at this state!

But far, far be it from him to love such

contempt as would tend to deprive him of God both in time and in eternity ! Rather should he hate and detest it with all his strength. Let him shun it by every means in his power, firmly trusting in the merits of Jesus Christ that such contempt may never be his due. To this end, let him incessantly pray God rather to change the horrible humiliation which follows upon sin and damnation into that other which, when compared with the former, is very slight, which does not deprive of God, but which, on the contrary, goes far toward securing to us His possession.

To this latter species of contempt let him turn with all his heart, and let him love the former only as much as is lawful. He will thereby glorify God and rise to pre-eminent sanctity.

IV. The practice of what we have laid down, and of what we now seek to establish, ought to be regulated by prudence and discretion. No one should go beyond his

actual strength, beyond the grace accorded him by God for the moment.

He that allows himself to be guided by obedience and the advice of an enlightened director will readily understand what we here advance.

These observations pre-supposed, we say that the most beautiful, as well as the most important, point in the love of self-contempt consists in examining thoroughly and embracing in detail, as far as is possible, the particular kinds of contempt mentioned in Article II.

Without such an application the love of which we speak would be imperfect and incapable of leading a soul to seek its own humiliation ; but if extended to the foregoing points, it will become perfect, it will become capable of attaining the end proposed. If our love for contempt be confined to generalities and abstract things, if it be not applied to the various species of contempt mentioned in Article II., it follows

that it will never in practice reach those particular humiliations that contradict most our natural inclinations. If it does attack that special species of pride which lies hidden in every breast, it will be but feebly and languidly, so feebly and so languidly as to prove it insincere.

A short reflection will convince us of the truth of this. There are not wanting souls, apparently of the best inclinations to virtue, who even aim at cultivating the love of contempt; they submit to certain humiliations, they endure certain injuries uncomplainingly; but let them receive some affront that wounds them deeply, that attacks their pride in its stronghold, and they become altogether different persons. They complain, they lament, they lose their peace of soul, and they plume themselves on their wonderful forbearance if they refrain from giving expression to some exterior act of resentment, to some desire of revenge, or regain their equanimity after more than one explosion

of passion. What does all this betray? Ah! it proves clearly that their love of contempt was neither perfect nor sincere. Satisfied with their general and abstract love, they never included in the idea they had formed of it that particular kind of humiliation most distasteful to them, for which they felt something approaching to horror. Their love was not comprehensive enough to embrace real and substantial contempt. They put aside those very humiliations that are most opposed to their natural inclinations and the pride inherent in their character. Can we wonder, then, to find them inconsistent on many occasions, submitting to certain kinds of humiliation and spurning others as insupportable? It is absolutely necessary that the love of which we treat should extend to all kinds of insults and injuries, with no other limitations than those of the humiliation itself.

That there may be no illusion in a matter so delicate, we ought to place before our

mental gaze the various kinds of contempt of which we may become the object and endeavor to awaken in our heart a strong affection for each. Those toward which we feel the greatest aversion, by reason of the particular circumstances in which we are placed, should be the very ones we should endeavor to love the most. By this means we shall soon love that particular humiliation which was before the most odious to us. Then, and then only, will our love for self-contempt be sincere, entire, and perfect.

Again, in defect of this comprehensiveness our love will be less efficacious in practice. It will languish, it will even be extinguished altogether on occasions best calculated to confound our pride and self-love, on occasions the best suited to despoil a man of himself and unite him to his God.

The occasions most advantageous to us are those upon which we have received

some affront, some contempt which attacks us in the very strongholds of our pride. A thousand exceptions, a thousand reservations opposed to general and ordinary rules rise up to authorize us to treat with them gently and warily. Nature shuts herself up as in a den. She defends herself by subtle reasoning. She seeks a thousand expedients to save her head, if she cannot do more. She adroitly shuns the death-blow. In this she imitates the serpent which, unable to escape the enemy, tries at least to save its head and thus elude entire destruction. Not so did Brother Anthony act. Brother Anthony made bread to perfection. No bread so white, so sweet, so exactly what the "staff of life" ought to be as Brother Anthony's bread. The prior, a far-seeing man, resolved that Brother Anthony's skill should outlive Brother Anthony himself, and so he sent two of the novices to learn from the good brother the art which he so perfectly

possessed. Now, the skilful brother-baker was no niggard of his knowledge, and he set to work zealously. All the little secrets of his trade were generously imparted to his two young disciples, who were soon enriched with his experience of years. But what cared they for an old man's experience? They would make bread in their own way. They did so, and when their term of duty came round the inward groans of the pious brotherhood as they sat at table were too deep for utterance. Something must be wrong. Inquiries were made, but no light thrown upon the mystery. The novices declared their bread made according to Brother Anthony's directions, and that was all they knew about it. They were silent on the minutiae observed by their instructor, but to which they scorned to descend. At last it was whispered around that Brother Anthony, in order to keep up his reputation, chose always the best flour for his own baking and left to

his pupils only what he would not use himself. In this spirit the bakery was invaded one day and searched from top to bottom, whilst the good brother stood by thanking God in his heart for the humiliation to which he was subjected, for never before had his word been doubted.

In the ordinary course of grace we cannot in painful occurrences thus overcome self and embrace contempt without a truly efficacious love, a generous courage which unhesitatingly attacks the enemy with repeated blows until at last he sinks vanquished.

But, O my God ! how can one have such courage if his love be languishing and defective on the very points that call for the most vigor ? And how can it have this quality if it has never been exercised upon that particular kind of humiliation ? How can he that has never dealt the least blow to his pride hope to conquer ?

Not only must we aim at loving that

species of contempt for which we feel the most aversion, but we must cherish particularly the various humiliations that actually befall us.

On the good use we make of them depends our sanctification. Wherever met, they should be the special object of our love, the booty which the passing moment offers to our grasp. It is the most holy will of God that sends them to us, or at least permits them to cross our path, a consideration that ought to render them both precious and pleasing. If we receive them lovingly, they will give greater glory to God whilst increasing our own merits and enriching our own crown. A famous director of souls once took to a certain convent a young lady whom he looked upon as in every way eligible for the religious life. It was not long before the experienced mistress discovered in her new subject signs of insanity. As in duty bound, she informed the superioress, who in turn made the discovery

known to the young lady's director. He was incensed at the news, as were also the sisters of the community, for no such sign had ever appeared in their presence. The good mistress suffered long and much in the affair, but remained firm in her conviction, and the novice was at last dismissed. Almighty God allowed His servant to endure censure and reproach on this head for many months, but the event proved the truth of her statement. The young girl did indeed lose her mind, and the humiliation which the mistress had so long and so patiently endured was turned for her into glory.

Let us, then, when resolving to accept all kinds of outrage and contempt, never make any exception, any reservation, such as, "Provided it does not actually wound us," etc. This very exception should be the principal object of our love, that we may thereby offer a proof of obedience to that great God who sends it to us from His throne in


heaven, who has from all eternity chosen it for us from among thousands of others as the most proper means to procure His glory and increase our merit.

When some unexpected humiliation comes upon us let us enter into the dispositions of Jesus Christ. Seeing in the crowd of brutal soldiers the wretch that had betrayed Him, the Divine Saviour uttered these words : "The chalice which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" *

* St. John xviii. 11.

ARTICLE V.

ADVANTAGES FLOWING FROM THE LOVE OF SELF-CONTEMPT.

O diminish the difficulties that often rise up to deter us from some glorious undertaking it is sometimes useful to compare them with the advantages accruing from the same. To encourage those souls that aim at the love of self-contempt we shall here sum up some of the advantages it brings along with it. Among many that might be enumerated we shall choose twelve.

First Advantage.—The destruction of pride, which has ever been and which still is the source of all evils to the human race. Can we doubt that this monster will be vanquished in proportion as the love of self-contempt gains strength in the heart of man ?

Second Advantage.—The destruction of

self-love, the wretched offspring of pride, which produces, nourishes, and strengthens it in her detestable bosom. He that cuts away the roots of a tree destroys at once its limbs and branches ; in like manner, he that roots out pride from the heart at the same time destroys self-love.

Third Advantage.—The remission of past sins. In loving contempt we restore that order which pride had overturned, and by our constant efforts to resist nature, so opposed to self-contempt, we pay off much of the debt contracted with Divine Justice by former sins.

Fourth Advantage.—The extirpation of self-love and the preservation from an infinity of sins arising from pride. The latter evil, pride, Almighty God calls *the beginning of all sin* ;* of the former, self-love, Jesus Christ says in the Gospel that *he that loveth his life shall lose it*.† If, then, these two fatal sources of all sins are banished from

* Ecclus. x. 15. † St. John xii. 25.

the heart, preservation from innumerable transgressions follows.

Fifth Advantage.—Deliverance from many troubles and afflictions. If we reflect upon the evils that afflict mankind, we shall discover that the greater part of them spring from aversion to everything like humiliation. Forgetting the reasons that justify their being held in contempt, men experience the most bitter chagrin when their honor is in any way wounded. If such persons were animated by the love of self-contempt, their agitation would soon cease, their heart rest in profound peace. And why? Because nothing can disturb the peace of him who seeks but God alone. Temporal losses do not affect him any more than personal contempt. In his eyes all such afflictions are trifles, are nothing compared with what his sins deserve.

Sixth Advantage.—The acquisition of perfect humility, a virtue which, as the saints tell us, forms the basis of holiness. The

love of contempt comprehends all that is most beautiful, most substantial, most solid in humility. This love is the touchstone of the truly humble.

Seventh Advantage.—The acquisition of evangelical perfection and the most eminent sanctity. The love of contempt dissipates all that is contrary to the highest perfection, weakens nature's vicious tendencies, and immeasurably increases the power of that grace which, whilst resisting the proud, God gives to the humble.* When He finds a heart void of self, a heart truly loving contempt, He inundates it with the plenitude of His Holy Spirit. By the practice of this love the soul testifies the greatest love for God, because, having immolated to Him what every honorable man esteems most precious—namely, his reputation and his good name—his love is all the purer for having been despoiled of self-interest.

Love of contempt likewise perfects love

* St. James iv. 6.

for the neighbor, which, by extending even to enemies, rises to heroism. It wonderfully preserves and increases mutual harmony in families and communities, a virtue so forcibly recommended by our Lord.

Eighth Advantage.—A perfect resemblance to Jesus Christ upon earth. Jesus was the butt, the centre of all contempt, of all affronts, of all opprobrium. He was saturated with humiliations; they had become His meat and drink.*

The value of this advantage may be understood from the reflection that *it is in conformity to Jesus Christ that consists*, according to St. Paul, *the mark of the predestined*.†

The most distinguished, the most eminent among the elect will be those in whom shines most brightly this characteristic; therefore, the love of self-contempt brings to its possessor the greatest security as to his eternal salvation.

Ninth Advantage.—The love of contempt

* Lament. iii. 30. † Rom. viii. 29.

brings with it abundant spiritual consolation. If Jesus Christ invites those that *labor and are heavily burdened to come to Him*, if He exhorts them to *learn of Him meekness and humility*,* it is beyond a doubt that the humility of which He speaks includes the love of self-contempt. It is at this price that He promises them *strength and relief, sweet rest of soul*.† Do we not see by this that souls who really love contempt taste, even in this world, perfect peace and contentment? If upon earth true spiritual consolation can be found, it is certainly the portion of such souls, since Almighty God takes particular care to console the humble.‡

Such souls receive also from God abundant and brilliant light, to them the source of untold delight. It was for this excellent gift that Jesus Christ gave thanks to His Father *for having revealed His secrets to little ones whilst He hid them from the wise and pru-*

* St. Matt. xi. 29. † Ibid. ‡ 2 Cor. vii. 6.

*dent.** This is what our Saviour meant when He promised to communicate His heavenly wisdom to those that have acquired humility.†

Tenth Advantage.—Ineffable peace and the greatest joy that can be tasted in this world—namely, the sweet thought at the hour of death of the glory they have given to God by the humiliations they have suffered for Him despite the repugnance of nature.

We shall here cite the example of a good religious who had long loved and practised self-contempt. He lay on his death-bed surrounded by his brethren. Looking from one to the other, he smiled graciously upon them. Then, gathering up his strength for a last effort, he thanked them affectionately for the great kindness they had shown him during his stay among them, for the humiliations they had heaped upon him, for their never having shown him the least mark of esteem, and for having humbled him in

* St. Matt. xi. 25. † Prov. xi. 2.

many ways in order to confound his pride and further his salvation. The monks were deeply mortified at their brother's words. They shed tears over their past conduct toward him. They now saw clearly that by their raillery, their derision and contempt, they had, though to the great prejudice of their own souls, formed a saint for heaven.

Eleventh Advantage.—Incomparable treasures and a plenitude of merits for the future life. Merits increase in proportion to the grace God bestows. He fills the humble with grace; they live and act for His love alone; consequently they soon become rich.

Twelfth Advantage.—A very high degree of glory in heaven. The glory of each soul is proportioned to its sanctity, and thus corresponds to its degree of resemblance to Jesus Christ. Here lies that exaltation so often promised by God to the truly humble, to those that abase themselves, that annihilate themselves for His love. They now

share largely in the glory of that Redeemer in whose humiliation they generously participated during life.

Let us conclude by declaring contempt in itself a most excellent good. Though it may not seem such to the eyes of human sense and reason, since it is concealed under a very bitter, a very revolting rind, yet its value is apparent to the mind enlightened by faith. The Christian should humbly beg Almighty God for the divine light of faith which should form the rule of all his thoughts and actions. It was owing to this light that the saints conceived so wonderful a love for contempt, that they desired it so ardently and sought it in a thousand ways; witness a St. Philip Neri, a St. Ignatius of Loyola. Some have even begged it earnestly of God as a recompense for the long and painful labors they underwent in His service and for His glory. St. John of the Cross, when questioned by our Lord as to what he desired as a reward for his labors, answered: "Lord,

to suffer and to be despised for the love of Thee."* Others have looked upon contempt as the truest enjoyment of a disciple of the Redeemer; they have found hidden in the deepest humiliations the highest happiness earth can afford. Such were the sentiments of St. Francis of Assisi.

From the foregoing we should conclude that, if we sincerely love God, if we seek our own true good, we should also love contempt. When some affront or outrage is offered us, instead of being afflicted, instead of yielding to complaints, we should experience satisfaction and consolation; we should rejoice that we have at last found the hidden treasure, the treasure known to so few. We should look with holy envy upon those just souls who peacefully and lovingly endured insults and outrages. We should congratulate them upon the ineffable happiness granted them by God, a happiness that falls to the lot of few. We should look

* *Breviar. Romanum.*

upon ourselves as unworthy to kiss their feet or to be their servants.

Who is the man that, with any pretension to wisdom, to wisdom enlightened by faith, would disdain such goods, would neglect such advantages? And yet we must acknowledge that it is very difficult to acquire the love of self-contempt. What then? Must we abandon its acquisition? By no means; such a conclusion would be most erroneous. Is not salvation itself difficult to attain? Does not Jesus Christ himself exclaim: "How narrow is the gate and straight is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it"?* Now, notwithstanding this, no Christian can conclude that the affair of salvation is to be neglected, but that every effort ought to be made, every means employed to attain it. The same may be said of the point under discussion, the acquiring of the love of self-contempt.

* St. Matt. vii. 14.

ARTICLE VI.

FIFTY EFFICACIOUS MEANS TO ACQUIRE THE LOVE OF SELF-CONTEMPT.



WE shall now lay down some excellent means for acquiring the love of which we speak. If employed faithfully and perseveringly, they will surely dispose the soul to obtain this precious gift from God.

First Means.—Assiduous, fervent, and continued prayer to obtain a love as repugnant to human inclinations as it is advantageous to ourselves and productive of honor to God. Such a prayer ought to be accompanied by diffidence in self, since we are wholly incapable of the least good. St. Paul says: "We cannot of ourselves conceive a good thought."* It ought also to be accompanied by confidence in God. This confidence should be founded upon the

* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

goodness of Almighty God, who can with the same ease bestow upon man benefits both great and small; also upon the truth of His divine promise: "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you." * "Therefore I say unto you, all things whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you." † Again, it should be founded upon the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. These merits belong to us. We should unceasingly offer them to the Eternal Father in our own behalf, as Jesus Christ has Himself taught us to do: "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you." ‡ Let us here cite an exquisite little example. It is related in the chronicles of the Friars Minor that one of the good brothers felt himself inspired to emulate the humility of their

* St. Matt. vii. 7. † St. Mark xi. 24.

‡ St. John xvi. 23.

holy founder, St. Francis. St. Francis, as we know, though raised to the highest perfection, was still so humble that he looked upon himself as the vilest sinner in the world. The good brother began to pray for the holy virtue of humility. He sighed, he wept, he resolved to taste no satisfaction in this life until he had obtained from God the object of his heart's desire. So perseveringly did he make use of these means that he was at last rewarded. One day he heard a voice saying to him: "What wilt thou give Me if I grant thee true humility?" "All, all, my God; all, even to my eyes!" And the voice answered: "Keep thy eyes. I grant thee humility!"

Second Means.—To plunge deeply, by the help of serious and continued meditation, into the knowledge of our own misery and the reasons that entitle us to contempt. Such knowledge is the foundation upon which the love of self-contempt rests, the source which gives rise to this love. All

know that when a large edifice is to be erected the workmen begin by laying a solid foundation, and that he who would gather the fruits of a tree must carefully lay the roots which are to nourish and sustain it. In the same way, after our prayer we should ardently apply to establishing solidly and deeply in our mind and heart a lively persuasion that we truly merit contempt. For this end we may very profitably make use of what has been said in Article I., in various parts of Article II., and in Observation III. of Article IV. It would be well also to meditate attentively on what Father Rodriguez says in his *Second Part of Christian Perfection*, and on Father Pinamonti's precious little treatise, *The Mirror that does not Deceive*. No day should pass without our having found out new motives upon which to build the edifice of our perfection. All that may happen to us or around us ought to contribute thereto.

Here we may remark that our reasons

for self-contempt daily increase in number, since our sins, our ingratitude, our infidelity toward the great and the good God are daily on the increase.

Third Means.—The consideration of our own poverty. The older we grow the more deserving are we of contempt. We ought to be convinced of this truth even if God has endowed us with the highest gifts of nature and of grace, raised us to brilliant dignities, etc. Such advantages are from God, the Author of all good, whilst we are always wicked, always ungrateful, always inclined to manifold disorders, always adding sin to sin. God's gifts are a reproach to us. They humble us powerfully, since the abuse of so many mercies makes our malice more apparent. Let us, then, familiarize ourselves with the thought that we are indeed poor in the sight of God. Let us say with Jeremias, "I am the man that see my poverty." *

Fourth Means.—Consider the natural in-

* Lament. iii. 1.

instinct of every created being. Every created being loves in its own way the place assigned it in creation and the treatment proper for it. For example, stones and all large bodies seek the lowest place, the place nearest their centre. Do we not see, also, streams of water flowing immense distances in order to find a resting-place in the bosom of the sea, in a deep valley, or even in some muddy, disgusting marsh?

Do not all kinds of animals love such pasturage as best suits them, however vile it may be in itself? Do they not hide in dens and caves best adapted to their mode of life without a thought of the meanness of their habitations?

Man himself, when he listens to the voice of reason suggesting to him what is proper to his station, is ashamed to look for treatment unsuited to the condition in which he is placed. If St. Philip Neri, a simple priest, sometimes occupied in the

midst of the Roman dignitaries the place destined for cardinals only, it was his extraordinary love for self-contempt that actuated him thereto. He did it that he might be looked upon as a fool, a proud, insolent man ; that by such titles he might obtain the favor of being ignominiously ejected from the seat he had usurped ; that he might be covered with confusion by the insults of a crowd of justly indignant witnesses.

But if our quality, our condition carries along with it contempt, if such be the treatment best suited to us, why should we not love it ? Why not cling to it with all our heart ? Ah ! let us put our hand to the work ! Let us begin by making acts of this love, by carefully exercising ourselves in its easiest practices, in those that fall in our way, in order to habituate ourselves to it little by little. After a while we may hope to do more, unless God should suddenly communicate to us

a great attraction. In that case we must co-operate faithfully.

Our desire for this love and the petition that we make for it must be regarded as a real act of the same, since we sincerely desire and pray for only what we really love. Practice will soon render it easy to produce many such acts, and this will be very advantageous to us. Let us esteem all souls that have reached the degree of the love of self-contempt, and let our only desire be to share in their happiness.

From this let us pass on to fervent aspirations, to inflamed ejaculatory prayers. Let us extol humiliations, let us look upon them with desire, let us receive them as our friends, the sources of the most excellent goods, the inseparable companions of Jesus Christ. Jesus embraced them at the moment of His temporal birth; He faithfully sought them during the whole course of His mortal life, and at the

moment of death He welcomed them more eagerly still, and pressed them tenderly to His bleeding Heart. Jesus has infinitely ennobled humiliations by His own close union with them. He gives them to His servants to be their distinctive characteristic, the sign of the predestined who are called to participate first in the shame of the Word Incarnate, afterward in the glory of the world's Redeemer.

Fifth Means.—Enlightened by this divine light, let us humble ourselves profoundly, let us annihilate ourselves before our God. Provided He does not despise us (although we richly deserve such treatment), let us dispose ourselves to receive willingly from His hand those humiliations that are accompanied by no sin, that will not separate us from Him, namely, interior humiliations, such as weakness of mind, darkness, desolation, want of memory, of understanding, of capacity; exterior humiliations, such as poverty, low birth and occupations, want

of corporal strength, bad health, and similar privations. Let us esteem it a special favor that Almighty God deigns to accept these trifling humiliations in lieu of the innumerable, grievous ones that are our due; above all, that He seeks by these small humiliations to deliver us from infinite and eternal contempt.

In thus making a good use of the humiliations that come to us immediately from God we shall wonderfully dispose our heart to accept those that we receive from creatures.

Sixth Means.—To be ever the first to despise ourselves. It is impossible for one to be willing to bear the contempt of others if he does not begin by despising himself. The multitude of our daily faults, the enormity of our sins, ought to make us despise ourselves. The reiteration of them before God will be an excellent exercise of self-contempt. We can confess that we are guilty sinners, ungrateful, unfaithful squanderers of His grace

and His precious Blood. We may add that we are full of malice and impiety. This, in a great measure, is always true. When it is not so it is not by our own strength that we shun vice, but by the effect of a grace of which we are totally undeserving. Reflecting upon what springs from ourselves, we may look upon ourselves as subject to all kinds of disorders, and thence draw motives of self-humiliation. This must, however, be done sincerely and heartily. We cannot mock God, the Searcher of hearts, who knows our most hidden intentions.

Again, we may frequently reproach ourselves, punish and abase ourselves, asking for pardon and mercy. We may practise contempt of self by making little of our own way of thinking, our reasons, our reflections, our tastes and inclinations, and by expressing implacable hatred toward our own will. This must always be understood of things contrary to God, for on many occasions we ought to set some value by our

works, not as emanating from ourselves, but as having God for their author.

It will be a good practice of self-contempt, to yield unhesitatingly to the judgment of others, to submit to their corrections, to their requirements, when not contrary to the will of God and His holy law; also, to exercise ourselves in hatred of self, in that indignation and vengeance against self so frequently inculcated in the Gospel and so faithfully practised by the saints. It is related of St. Alphonsus da Liguori, who was often called the Francis de Sales of his age, that in his great humility he frequently asked the opinion of persons of very moderate learning and talent. In his own opinion he was never obstinate, and was always the first to condemn himself if he happened to make a mistake.

Seventh Means.—Sovereignly to detest the character of such as despise their neighbor. We shall discuss this point more at length at the close of this treatise. To despise others

and to be despised by others are two things diametrically opposed to each other ; the first we must detest, the second love. Let us see how our Lord Jesus Christ comported Himself. He was, beyond the power of words to express, despised by men, and with infinite love He received their unworthy treatment. But did He in return despise even those that despised Him? Ah, no ! So great was His love for men, for even the vilest, the most rebellious and ungrateful, the most furious of His enemies and persecutors, that to gain them, to save them, He poured out for them His precious Blood.

Far from contemning others, let us, like our Lord, make it a duty to love, to esteem, to honor, to assist all with whom we are thrown. Let us compassionate their miseries, let us do them good ; in a word, let us act toward them in a manner just the opposite to that set forth in the sixty-six points of Article Second.

Lastly, to help us to practise the above let us consider our own defects as opposed to ,

the good qualities of others. Let us be persuaded that, if others sin, we should commit far more enormous crimes than they were we exposed to the same temptations; were we, for instance, of a less docile temper, were our lights, our graces fewer, our education less, our inclination to evil more violent, our temptations stronger, our occasions of sin more numerous and more seductive. That we do not fall, or that our falls are not so grievous as those of others, is owing entirely to the gratuitous liberality of God, to whom, notwithstanding, we but too often testify the most monstrous ingratitude. This last consideration, that of our own ingratitude, should lead us to humble ourselves deeply and despise ourselves alone. It may sometimes happen that we feel a certain sentiment of joy or satisfaction at seeing our neighbor despised. This feeling arises but too often in our heart, especially when there is question of those that have despised us or given occasion to others to do so. In such cases we

must instantly repress such feelings by contrary acts. We must disavow those fatal effects of our corrupt nature, and endeavor, as far as we can, to console our neighbor in whatever humiliations may come upon him. We should also ward off from him the contempt of others. Oh, what treasures of merit would we lay up before God by such a line of conduct!

Eighth Means.—After laying a solid foundation of humility we must be extremely watchful on certain occasions. If we should happen to be the recipients of some good, let us beware of attributing it to any merit of our own. Merit must not be supposed to exist in us. We should repute ourselves unworthy of favor, and attribute all that we enjoy to the pure mercy of God and the charity of our neighbor. Let us be modestly confused by it, and let us testify our gratitude to him from whom we have received it. This feeling should be all the more lively, since a benefit small in itself becomes great when be-

stowed upon such as we are. But if some harm is done to us, let us look upon it as a trial to which God submits us; attribute it entirely to our own demerit, and receive it as our just due. In this way we shall accept such things first patiently, then readily, and, lastly, lovingly.

Ninth Means.—Place unreservedly our honor in the hands of Jesus. Make to the Lord an offering of our whole being, above all, if our spiritual director counsels such a step, and hold ourselves in the disposition to bear whatever contempt may befall us. If nature shudders at such an oblation, we should neither listen to it nor spare it. Let us abandon ourselves to the conduct of Divine Providence and trust to Him for the help of which we have need.

Tenth Means.—Let us arm ourselves with courage, with Christian strength and vigilance, that we may not be surprised on occasions unforeseen. When the opportunity presents itself for putting the love of con-

tempt into practice we must not shrink from it, no matter under what form it may present itself. Is there any species of contempt that we do not deserve?

Eleventh Means. — When contempt and humiliation come upon us, we must instantly close the eyes of human reason and open those of faith. We must regard those that despise us as instruments in the hands of Divine Justice, chosen from all eternity to execute in time—yea, at this precise moment, the infinitely wise decrees of His providence. As St. Alphonsus Liguori sat writing in his room one day, a person entered and asked for a certain favor at the bishop's hands. The saint, knowing the individual to be unworthy of it, told him that it had already been bestowed upon another. "Is it you that they call the saint?" cried the man in a passion. "Fine sanctity, indeed! A saint knows how to be just." St. Alphonsus resumed his work, and neither by word nor look betrayed the least emotion. Let us

look upon the contempt offered us as a portion of the chalice prepared for us by our Heavenly Father, who chastises us for our own good, who casts us down to raise us up. Listen to Jesus when delivered over to the fury of His enemies, when saturated with contempt and ignominy : " The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it ? " *

Let us endeavor to accept it willingly, invoking for this end the Divine Assistance by some inflamed aspirations. Let us store it away as a precious thing in the depths of our heart, and, despite the repugnance of nature, let us be careful not to lose a single drop of it. Let us at once stifle every impetuous movement, every feeling of resentment, all the exaggerated reasoning and discourse against it that may present themselves to our mind. Human reasoning is to be shunned at such moments ; naked faith alone is to be consulted. Let us lay

* St. John xviii. 11.

the case before our God, speaking to Him, if not in words, at least by our sighs and groans, by the anguish of our heart, and beg Him to aid and comfort us. To men we must speak not at all of our affliction, unless it be to receive the spiritual advice and the help of which we have need. In this latter case, let it be done to some enlightened person capable of directing us in our great need.

Twelfth Means.—If, when under the pressure of humiliation, we feel the power of grace grow weak in us whilst that of revolting nature is increased, then is the time to imitate the Apostle St. Peter. Behold him as he walks securely upon the billows of the sea at the word of his Divine Master! But see, his courage grows weak before the violence of the gale, and he begins to sink. “Lord, save me!”* he cries, and in that moment he is saved. Jesus draws him from the abyss about to swal-

*St. Matt. xiv. 30.

low him. When disheartened by the sight of some deep humiliation, let us recur to God eagerly and fervently, let us reanimate our faith and hope. By acts of generous humility, acts directly contrary to the passion that rules us, let us plunge into the abyss open before us, let us weep and sigh before the Lord, and we shall soon see the mercy of the all-powerful God descending upon us. The whisperings of self-love must be stifled at their birth. The words and truths that God has revealed to us must now come in to take their place.

In the splendor of the light that will then be vouchsafed to us, we shall see clearly and acknowledge openly that the contempt offered us is trifling in comparison with what we deserve. We shall confess that, on account of our sins, wrong ceases to be wrong when we are concerned; it then becomes justice.

Happy he that knows how to consume in the torch of faith whatever humiliation may

befall him ! We shall speedily arrive at this enviable state if, when our honor is most severely attacked, we make use of the just balance of the sanctuary, putting on one scale the injuries and insults we receive and on the other what we lawfully deserve. Again, do not let us confine ourselves to what we merit under just one circumstance or for one particular action. It is in this way many deceive themselves. But let us place in the balance the great mass of our sins, our ingratitude, our infidelity, for which Almighty God has a right to punish us at all times, in every way, in every place, and under all circumstances. And, if we have not lost faith and judgment, we shall clearly see that what we deserve far outweighs the injury done us. Compared with the former, the latter are not worthy of a passing thought.

Again, let us compare the humiliation that appears to us so insupportable with those that Jesus Christ was pleased to en-

ture. Let us weigh their number, their grievousness, their circumstances; let us compare the personal merit of Jesus with our own, and we shall blush, we shall be confounded. We shall be forced to cry out with the good thief: "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done no evil."*

Thirteenth Means.—The following practice may be found by many very advantageous. As soon as they are stung by some contempt, deeply wounded by some humiliation, let them enter into themselves and examine into the cause of the bitterness they experience. Let them compare it with any one of the sixty-six points mentioned in Article II., and then reflect on the proportion borne by this single humiliation to the whole, the totality of contempt that they most truly merit. Such a reflection cannot fail to rob any outrage, any af-

* St. Luke xxiv. 41.

front of even the shadow of injustice. Their next care should be to accept cheerfully this particular humiliation sent by God at this particular moment. This practice will be most useful, especially upon unlooked-for occasions. Experience shows that the good, but general maxim : *I deserve contempt*, does not of itself suffice for the object in view. We must come down to particulars. It is just *this* humiliation, with all its attendant circumstances of time and place and persons, that we must embrace with submission of mind and affection of heart, if we would put the foregoing maxim into effect. And this must be done promptly. The victory must be won before self-love has time to awake, gather new strength, fill the mind with its noxious vapors, and prevent its recognizing the value of this humiliation and its conformity with the decrees of Divine Justice.

The foregoing practice is absolutely necessary. Our weak heart, far from loving par-

ticular humiliations, conceives horror for them, turns away from them. And behold the consequences—the beautiful virtue of humility wounded, a blessed occasion of practising it lost for ever, pride fostered !

The following short reflections may spur us on to fidelity on occasions so trying to poor nature :

“What has just happened to me is a species of contempt, at least my pride, my imagination represents it to me as such. But is it not justly my due, since I deserve all kinds of contempt? My greatest solicitude should be to receive it cheerfully, to love it ardently. Ah, then, I embrace it tenderly and along with it all the circumstances with which my God clothes it! Help me, my good Jesus! Help me!”

He that acts thus is a brave soldier of Christ. When unexpectedly assailed, he grasps his sword, he attacks the enemy, and conquers him. How different is that cowardly, despicable fellow who, with his sword

at his side, either knows not how to use it, or is afraid to do so ! He is easily overcome in an unforeseen attack.

Experience will teach the importance of the above.

St. Alphonsus was proverbial for meekness in his own household. When any cause of annoyance arose among its members, his usual exclamation to the offending party was: "May you become a saint!" In graver matters, he used to raise his eyes to heaven and murmur: "God's will be done!"—or, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!"

Fourteenth Means.—In moments of humiliation we must take no resolutions except such as are perfectly conformable to the Gospel, or such as are exacted by God Himself, by obedience, or by a well-defined necessity. Passion easily deceives.

Again, at such moments let us beware of complaints and lamentations, as if some great wrong had been done us. What!

could a wrong, an injustice be done to one that really deserves contempt? If we must sorrow let it be over the disproportion of what we endure to what we deserve. This was the habitual practise of St. Rose of Lima, that pure and holy virgin. If we have but few occasions to satisfy God for our sins, it will be all the worse for us to neglect them. Great will be our debt when the time comes for settling with Divine Justice.

Under the pressure of humiliation, we should refrain from representing in their full force (unless it be absolutely necessary) the reasons which might enable others to pour a healing balm upon our wounded self-love. But if treating with those that will show us no mercy, with those that will frankly tell us wherein we are wrong, we may expose such reasons with candor and sincerity. A contrary line of conduct may be adopted here, namely, as far as truth will permit, we may excuse our ag-

gressors, setting forth their action against us in the most favorable light.

Fifteenth Means.—Unless obliged to do so, we must refrain from excusing or justifying ourselves, even if it should seem that the outrages offered us are directly opposed to truth and justice.

This is the most excellent part of this matter ; this is what stifles pride and self-love ; this is true self-abnegation ; this is the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ, the shortest and most efficacious means of arriving at the love of contempt. A contrary mode of action satisfies nature, foments its evil inclinations, supports its life. “He that can take it, let him take it.”*

Sixteenth Means.—Let us make the following just reflection. Although it may not be true that we have committed the faults imputed to us, yet it cannot be denied that others have good reason to think

* St. Matt. xix. 12.

ill of us ; for it is very true that we are capable of falling into the excesses of which we have been accused, and even into more enormous ones. It is most true that we should have committed them in very deed had not the Divine Power, in spite of what we deserve, delivered us from them.

To God, then, to God be all the honor and glory of our having escaped the pit-fall ; but to us, guilty or not guilty, shame and confusion ! It is God who sends it, let us receive it with love.

When a servant of God profits by such occasions, inexpressible is his advancement in virtue, and untold his increase of eternal glory. His silence before men is a loud cry in the ears of the God of majesty. But here let us observe that the silence of words alone does not suffice. The silence of the tongue must be accompanied by the silence of the eyes and other features ; gestures, movements, attitude, the whole person must refrain from what the

lips are forbidden to speak. Let no one be able to observe in our exterior the least sign that would betray that we think ourselves in the right.

Still more, this perfect exterior silence must be a true indication of interior silence. We must turn our mind away from the reasons that arise in our favor, and fix it absolutely upon Jesus crucified, to whose annihilation we thereby render homage ; or we may consider in the light of God all that renders us worthy of contempt. By so doing we shall soon be convinced that the right by which we think ourselves authorized to shun opprobrium, is in reality wrong.

Seventeenth Means.—The imitation of Jesus Christ, who would not justify Himself when laden with the most horrible calumnies, in order to teach us silence under accusation. Let us here consider that the falsehoods invented against Jesus were like so much filth cast upon an infinitely noble object ; they were, in consequence, infinitely injurious to His

sovereign majesty. But such calumnies, if invented against us, would be only slight stains upon an object so vile in itself that they can scarcely be perceived. A soil very perceptible upon royal robes would pass unnoticed upon the blouse of a collier or the rags of a mendicant.

Jésus, the Splendor of His Father's glory, the Substantial Image of His beauty, was covered with the blackest, the most abominable calumnies, and He offered no excuse. "*He was silent, He opened not His mouth,*" * says the Prophet Isaias.

And we, vile creatures, miserable worms of the earth, under the eyes of our Sovereign, Himself so unworthily treated—we cannot endure silently a slight attack upon our reputation! We warmly repulse our adversary, we would crush the insinuation in its birth! Do we not act in this as if to us, and not to Jesus, appertained rank and nobility, purity and innocence, and all other

* Isai. liii. 7.

passports to general esteem? Can a Christian that professes to love his crucified God view such a parallel without the blush of shame mantling his cheek? Will he refuse to drink submissively the chalice of ignominy which Jesus has drained to the dregs?

Christian souls, gaze upon this incomprehensible, this astounding contrast—Jesus is silent, and you are eager to speak! Where is your resemblance to Jesus Christ? where the respect due to God Himself?

Eighteenth Means.—In order to conform to the Divine Model presented us on Calvary, he that aspires to true humility must not stop here. He must go so far that his silence under calumnies, his sweetness and affability toward his accusers should appear to be, as far as is possible, not the effects of his love for contempt. An opposite course would lead him far from the end proposed, and, instead of humility, he would encourage in his soul the swellings of the most subtle pride. In the midst of injuries

and railleries, derision and calumny, our exterior should be such as to make us pass for stupid, spiritless creatures that notice nothing of what is going on around us. With King David, let us say: "But I, as a deaf man, heard not: and was as a dumb man not opening his mouth." *

Or let us behave as one that pleads guilty, but who, for want of solid excuses, suffers silently and with bowed head, more from necessity than from choice; more from want of courage and feeling than from virtue; more from inability to prove his innocence than from a desire to practise virtue; more to escape further punishment than to imitate Jesus Christ.

Happy he that knows how to conduct himself in this way! Happier still is he that can advance a step further, that can, in the most humiliating circumstances, skillfully but prudently discover some of his real defects, with the view to increase the

* Ps. xxxvii. 14.

contempt felt for him, and thus render it still more painful! Ah! what abundance of merit would not such a course procure a man! Weigh well the advice of St. Bernard: "He that would be truly humble should aim only at appearing vile and contemptible, and not merely humble and a lover of contempt." Let us try to practise this in the following cases. We shall find it comparatively easy:

When others undertake to instruct us upon some point, as if we were ignorant of it or had forgotten it, let us listen quietly without giving them to understand that we already know what they would teach us.

Again, when reprimanded or corrected as if subject to some vice, we should not make known our innocence, unless the glory of God or the edification of the neighbor demands it.

Nineteenth Means.—To perfect the holy work we must advance another step. If in the midst of calumnies we refrain, for the

love of God, from resentment, complaints, and self-justification, we must be careful not to yield to the weakness of desiring, still less of procuring that others should take up our cause, plead our defence, unveil the calumnies heaped upon us, and clearly prove our innocence. Ah! who does not see that such conduct, whilst closing one gate to pride and self-love, opens a still broader avenue to those evils? Every one knows that one's justification would be much more perfect, his glory greater, if others, especially if they are persons of authority and consideration, should justify him. Let us study, then, on such occasions to repress such desires and to refrain from such measures. Let us recur to Our Lord and fervently beg His assistance that we may never yield to this illusion so fatal to holy humility.

But should it happen that, without any concurrence on our part, some one should step forward to defend us, we must in-

stantly stifle every sentiment of complacency that might then arise, courageously renounce it, and cast ourselves with perfect indifference into the hands of God. We do not say that it is not allowable to rejoice in the triumph of truth. Our joy, however, must turn not upon the thought that truth in this instance is very advantageous to us, but upon this, that it procures glory to God who has thus disposed things.

As it is difficult for weak and imperfect souls to make an exact discrimination in such points, and as self-research is dangerous, the surest way for them will be to reject at once or, at least, not to pause complacently upon the circumstances that brought about their justification. It would be far better to make acts of the love of contempt; to hope, for instance, that all the means of justification employed in their behalf may not be thoroughly understood; that the good offices some seek to

render us should not have their full effect; that some one may abuse his authority, in order to oppose those friendly efforts; and that, in spite of our innocence being proved, many will not lose the prejudice, the bad opinion they have formed of us. We may use similar means as the spirit of humility may suggest. Above all, let us sincerely regard ourselves as unworthy to find any champion to justify us. Let us beware that a poor, human relief may not rob us of a precious occasion of acquiring merit in the sight of God by the most perfect practice of humility and patience.

Twentieth Means.—It is not always out of place, and in some cases it is very proper for the lovers of contempt to make known to a man filled with the spirit of God the injuries offered them, in order to receive from him counsel and encouragement. But that they may not deceive themselves, which they might very easily

do, we shall say that only on the following conditions may a person speak of contempt received :

First.—When the glory of God, charity for the neighbor, a greater good, or a real necessity, exacts it of us ; and, lest he should fall into the snare of self-love, let him not be too easily persuaded that he has such motives. The truly humble man before justifying himself consults God in prayer, asks advice of those well versed in such matters, and takes time to discover the truth.

Secondly.—Let him ask himself the question : “ Do I deserve that any one should listen to me, or take an interest in my affairs ? ”

Thirdly.—He should not make his representation angrily. Sweetness and moderation, humility and frankness should characterize his words and bearing at such moments. The terms he uses should tend more to self-accusation than to the blame

of others, than to making known and exaggerating the injuries he has received. He must carefully guard the honor of his calumniators, that contempt may not pass from himself, who alone deserves it, to those of whom he speaks.*

* Our desire that this doctrine be not abused obliges us to say that there is one case in which, without detriment to charity or true humility, we cannot shield the reputation of our calumniators, namely: when their falsehoods hurt not only ourselves but prejudice also the souls of our brethren. Under such circumstances we may follow the example of Jesus Christ, King of the humble and perfect model of true humility. He publicly reproached the Scribes and Pharisees with their vices, above all, with their perversity in the calumnies they invented against Him. In this, however, as the author observes, we must not overstep the bounds of justice, we must not foster our own hatred against our neighbor under the pretext of defending the interest of God. This is a very delicate matter; it calls for much prayer and circumspection.

We may add that the renouncement of one's own justification, so frequently recommended in this little treatise, almost always admits of the same exception. Jesus Christ justified Himself against the calumnies of His enemies and, dur-

Fourthly.—He must be prepared to see himself neither believed nor seconded; so that, instead of defence and justification, he meets still greater contempt.

It was with these four generous dispositions that Jesus Christ made known upon the cross the burning thirst that the fury of His enemies made Him endure. The interests of the glory of God urged him thereto, and that *the Scripture might be ful-*

ing His passion, complained before the High Priest of the injury done Him, because they dealt death-blows at souls and the honor of God. They offended directly against truth to the prejudice of which it is never permitted to humble one's self. St. Augustine teaches this in lib. ii. *De Mendacio*, cap. x.; also St. Thomas (1, 2 quæst. 3 ad 2, et quæst. 100a ad 5 et ad 4).

Although in certain cases silence and concealment of truth are permitted when such a course injures neither the glory of God nor the good of the neighbor, yet it is never allowable for the motive of humbling one's self to contravene the truth ever so little, either by dissimulation or lies, since true humility is founded on truth.

The author clearly implies the above in his treatise.

*filled.** He had taken upon Himself the sins of the world. On account of those sins, therefore, Jesus knew that He deserved neither to be delivered from His pains nor to receive any relief. He made known His needs, and, although it was extreme, He expressed it in but one simple word: "I thirst."† He calmly awaited still worse treatment than He had hitherto received; and He was not disappointed, since, instead of a draught of cold water, His executioners offered Him vinegar and gall.

O great, O beautiful Model! How worthy art Thou of earnest imitation!

Twenty-first Means.—Incalculable will be our merits, if being accused of faults that we have not committed or that have involuntarily escaped us, and which before God are no sins; if being humbled, mortified, even punished, for such faults, we not only refrain from proving our innocence, as we might easily do, but if we

* St. John xix. 28.

† St. John xix. 28.

conspire, so to say, against ourselves, accusing ourselves and confessing our misery. Here, however, we must be exceedingly careful not to say the least word that would sound like an acknowledgment of what we are accused, since that would be contrary to truth.

When receiving such reproaches and punishments, our manner, our countenance, our whole exterior should betray our inward consciousness of guilt before God. Under this conviction we must renounce every excuse we might otherwise allege.

This is the way the saints acted in imitation of their model, Jesus Christ upon the cross. When annihilated, when drenched with confusion, Jesus gave no sign that the sins for which He suffered were not His own. As if confusion had prevented His raising His head, the Prophet says of him: "His look, as it were, hidden and despised." * And Jesus, by the mouth of another prophet, says of Himself: "But I

* Isai. liii. 3.

am a worm and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." *

O souls, souls burning with love for Jesus ! can it be that the example of your Well-Beloved will not inspire you to imitate Him ?

But if you should really be guilty of the faults laid to your charge, confess them simply and sincerely. Do not extenuate them, do not palliate them. No, rather suggest to your accuser some circumstance unknown to him, which will prejudice him still more against you and lead him to treat you with greater contempt.

Let us not forget this in the tribunal of penance. There let us accuse ourselves humbly and sincerely ; let us desire to appear what we are in reality, miserable sinners ; let us never advance the least excuse to extenuate our offences.

Twenty-second Means. — Behold another secret for rapid advancement in the love of contempt : When abased and vilified,

* Ps. xxi. 7.

instead of desiring our enemies to be punished, if we aspire to perfection we shall not even desire that God should defend us, nor manifest our innocence in this life, nor in any way deliver us from disgrace. We must rather prefer the contrary, provided the Lord sustains us; that is, we should prefer being left in humiliation, as if we deserved it by a title of justice. We should also be disposed to suffer cheerfully God's abandonment of us in all that is sensible and human. Let Him be patient with our enemies until they have thoroughly disgraced us, until the chain of events and appearances leads to the belief that it is He Himself that is humbling us for our sins rather than man, and that He is making use of these ministers of His wrath in order to show forth in the most striking manner His vengeance against us. *

* This and other similar passages must not be understood in a sense to exclude the desire of the conversion of one's enemies, this desire being commanded by the law of fraternal charity.

The lovers of contempt will, on such occasions, practise eminent virtue by courageously abandoning themselves to the conduct of God. Let them joyously and lovingly celebrate the Divine Justice in these words of the Psalmist: "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgments are right." * That the effects of this adorable justice should be felt by them in this life and that those of mercy should be reserved for a blessed eternity, are to them subjects for rejoicing.

But it is from the example of Jesus Christ that souls find strength for the practice of solid virtue. Jesus, as the Prophet Isaias expresses it, was exposed upon Calvary *as a leper, as a notorious malefactor, convicted of the most execrable crimes, as a man struck by God for his sins*, the victim of divine vengeance. † When His furious persecutors exult in the accomplishment of their designs against Him, when they triumphantly lift their eyes to the ignominy-

* Ps. cxviii. 137. † Isai. liii. 4.

ous gibbet to which they have fastened Him, what is His sorrow to find Himself abandoned by His Heavenly Father as if the weight of crime which He had taken upon Himself were really His own! Ah! hearken to the cry of distress that escapes Him in His last, bitter moments: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Far from my salvation are the words of my sins." *

Thrice happy are they that keep their eyes fixed upon this Divine Model! We may, however, ask with submission to the Divine Will, to be delivered even in this life from the persecutions that afflict us. But it is the fruit of a far higher virtue to repress such desires, and to seek but opprobrium and abandonment, in order to keep Jesus company, to practise self-hatred, to serve God in naked faith, in hope strong against every discouragement, in charity detached from every earthly or

* Ps. xxi. 1.

even heavenly consolation. Such dispositions are the sources of abundant merits. They are infinitely pleasing to God ; but they are to be obtained only by fervent prayer and faithful co-operation with grace.

Twenty-third Means. — When enduring humiliation, let us thank God, let us bless Him with all our heart that, by sending us the mere shadow of contempt in this life, He mercifully saves us from eternal contempt in the next. By this means, He leads us to true holiness, and prepares us occasions to acquire for heaven immense treasures of merit. As our thanksgivings are feeble expressions of gratitude for so great goodness toward us, let us, in imitation of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, beseech others to unite their voices to ours in glorifying God. St. Elizabeth having been ignominiously expelled from her own palace, arrived at last exhausted and penniless at a certain monastery. What is her first request of the good abbot? That

he should assemble his monks, and bid them chant the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving for the outrages she had just received. Who will help us to imitate St. Elizabeth? Who will chant our *Te Deum* with us? Who but the glorious Mother of God, with the whole angelic court of heaven? All the blessed will eagerly hymn our thanks to God, if we fervently ask them.

Twenty-fourth Means.—We should try to do all the good we can to those that despise us. We should joyfully embrace every occasion that presents itself to render them a service; and if such occasions do not fall in our way, we must seek them, in order to testify our gratitude to those that have procured for us the inestimable advantage of humbling ourselves. This is what Jesus teaches us by word and example.

If we must recompense surgeons and physicians when they free us from what might cause our death, although their treat-

ment gives us pain, with how much greater reason should we feel thankful to those that despise us. When opportunity offers we should further their interests, publicly declare ourselves their supporters, and seek their good with greater solicitude than if we were to receive rich recompense for our services.

Did not our Lord set us this example when from the height of the cross He pleaded the cause of His crucifiers? "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" *

Twenty-fifth Means.—We ought to pray in a very special manner for our calumniators. Is not this the command of our Saviour? "Pray for those that persecute and calumniate you." † All can practise this point; all can pray for their enemies. Upon receiving some injury or humiliation, first let us lovingly turn to God with an offering of the same, but let our second

* St. Luke xxiii. 34. † St. Matt. v. 44.

act be to beseech Him earnestly for blessings upon those that afflict us. By this practice the first movement of those feelings of revenge and resentment to which the human heart is prone is forestalled. But as it is difficult, perhaps impossible, for some to dwell in time of humiliation upon the truths taught us by God, the best thing at such moments is to stand in spirit at the foot of the cross and listen to Jesus praying for His enemies. Ah! then we can earnestly and repeatedly implore mercy for those that have done us wrong. That our prayers may be the more efficacious, let us offer to the Eternal Father the infinite merits, the Blood of Jesus Christ, with all that He has done and suffered for man. Let us run through the different mysteries of His life, His passion, and His death, imploring from time to time the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and offer all for those that have humbled us.

Who can say how agreeable to God are

such prayers, when the heart pours itself out in the midst of the revolts and repugnances of fallen nature? Who can number the blessings they draw down upon us?

It was to recompense such a prayer addressed to Him by the holy man Job for those that had heaped outrages upon him that God, contrary to all hope, delivered the patriarch from the abyss of pain and tribulation in which he was plunged. It was by the same means that St. Seraphin, a Capuchin religious, was suddenly inundated with strength and joy so remarkable that from that same moment contempt no longer gave him pain and the repugnance he had for it, and which had violently tormented him for many years, vanished.

Such a prayer undoubtedly gives great glory to God, renders a man the object of His complacency, and attracts upon him a thousand blessings. If through our prayers Almighty God should grant salvation to those that despise us and who otherwise

would be lost ; if by the help of His powerful grace He should elevate them even in this life to a high degree of perfection and afterward to a distinguished rank in His heavenly kingdom, what an inestimable advantage it would be for them and for us, what glory to God !

The fervor with which we should implore mercy for our persecutors must be proportioned to the measure of their contempt for us. It would be well to apply to them for several days or several weeks the Masses at which we assist, our acts of charity, and in general all the good works we shall perform. The stronger the repugnance we feel for them the more multiplied our good offices in their behalf. Above all, let our sacrifice for them be *crowned* by the merits of the pain *they themselves* cause us, and, that our prayers may have greater weight, let us endeavor to advance in patience and the other virtues. But would we go still further? Would we im-

measurably increase our treasures in heaven? Then let us add corporal penance to our prayer, either to obtain pardon for those that have injured us or to satisfy Divine Justice for them in advance.

Thus did David act. "But as for me, when they were troublesome to me I was clothed with hair-cloth. I humbled my soul with fasting." *

Still more, if our persecutors are given up to other disorders, let us strive by every means to draw them from their unhappy state. But if some of them have departed this life, let us endeavor to diminish their pains and shorten their stay in purgatory. Ah! will not he who does this convincingly testify his love for God by that which he bears his neighbor?

Such is the only revenge permitted a Christian, and such the most efficacious means to enkindle in our own soul a sincere love for self-contempt. Such is the

* Ps. xxxiv. 13.

faithful imitation of Jesus Christ. Covered with opprobrium upon the cross, He prayed for His enemies, He cheerfully died to save them.

May Jesus pour into all hearts His spirit holy and divine !

Twenty-sixth Means.—The better to succeed in our undertaking, it would be very advantageous to make to Almighty God a solemn offering of our honor, and frequently to renew it, especially in the time of humiliation. Let us entirely despoil ourselves before the majesty of God of our reputation and all special claims to consideration and respect. Let us constitute Him the Master of it, to destroy it entirely if such be His good pleasure, provided only that He give us the necessary strength to bear the pain attendant upon such a process.

Many of the saints thus animated themselves to lay down their life for Jesus Christ; their gratitude led them to give

blood for blood. "My blood in order to give back to Jesus Christ what He has deigned to shed for me!" Let us make use of the same war-cry, *Honor for honor!* It is just that mine should be sacrificed in return for that which Jesus Christ sacrificed for me upon the cross.

But, O my God, what a difference between the two! What Jesus sacrificed for me was of infinite value, and what I lay down for Him is worthy of no consideration. In spite of its unworthiness, however, Jesus will be well pleased with it. And I? Ah! should I not exult in the thought of being able to make to Him the sacrifice, miserable though it be?

We must carefully guard against the loss of reputation through our own fault, namely, by committing sin, giving scandal, or causing our neighbor chagrin and vexation. But, with these exceptions, if we lose our good name after the abandonment we shall have made of it to our Heavenly Father, in

order to render homage to His infinite sovereignty, to satisfy His irritated justice, to imitate His Son annihilated and covered with opprobrium for us; it will certainly be no essential loss to us, but rather the laying up of an immense treasure and a source of inappreciable good.

But let us mount still higher. Let us, if we would make a still more agreeable sacrifice to our God, offer it for the advantage of our persecutors themselves. Let us be willing to lose our good name, provided that theirs be preserved, their renown increased; let us be trodden under foot, that our deep humiliation may become their stepping-stone to glory and exaltation.

Twenty-seventh Means.—If when we endure contempt we experience what we imagine to be sorrow for the offence offered to God and the harm our adversaries entail upon themselves, let us be on our guard against the delusions of pride and self-love. They are subtle enemies that know how to

disguise themselves under the appearance of virtue.

We must not judge those by whom we are humbled. We should ascribe their fault to ignorance, inattention, impulse, or even to the praiseworthy motive they may have of correcting us and lowering our pride. This last consideration should always influence us in the case of Superiors. A very good test of the genuineness of the sorrow we feel is to examine whether it would possibly be as great if the contempt in question fell upon others instead of ourselves. If not, we may safely conclude that its source lies not in the outrage done to God and the consequent loss to souls, but that it springs from wounded self-love. In this latter case we must temper our regret with sentiments of humility and love of contempt.

But if, happily, we find that our sorrow does really spring from our sensitiveness for God's honor, we must then distinguish two

things, namely, the injury done to ourselves and the outrage offered to God. The first we must love, the second we must deplore.

By the foregoing practice we shall become very like Jesus Christ upon the cross. He loved His own annihilation whilst grieving over the horrible excesses of His executioners and their eternal reprobation. The principal glory that God desires from us on such occasions is the destruction of our pride by means of the humiliation He sends us. He knows infinitely better than we how to promote His own glory. As to the spiritual loss of our persecutors, if we are sincere in our sorrow for the same, we shall, by fervent supplication, invoke the mercy of God in their behalf. Should our disgrace occasion temporal loss to our friends or relatives, even then we should accept it lovingly. If we can remedy it lawfully, we may do so; if not, prayer, confidence in God, submission to His will must be our "refuge in time of trouble."

Twenty-eighth Means.—When through weakness we have committed some fault on an occasion of humiliation we must carefully shun two evils that will assail us, first, an obstinate clinging to our pride and vanity, which have caused our fall; second, dejection and cowardice, which would lead us to abandon our enterprise of acquiring the love of contempt.

As soon as the fault is perceived we should humble ourselves deeply before God, and whilst detesting it make use of it to sink into the depths of our own nothingness and to acknowledge that we are proud, inconstant, and unfaithful creatures, incapable of the least good. If circumstances permit, let us not only ask pardon of God, but also of our fellow-men, cheerfully and courageously submitting to the mortification and punishment our conduct deserves. The saints teach us by their example to impose some corporal punishment upon ourselves whenever we commit a fault. Such a mode

of action finds the antidote in the poison itself. It repairs our losses by new gains. St. Philip Neri bids us consider upon such occasions that had we been truly humble we never should have fallen, and if the hand of God had not sustained us we should have yielded still more to the violence of the temptation. Everlasting thanksgiving be to Him whose power upheld us!

If, on the contrary, we have been constant under the pressure of humiliation, let us beware of self-esteem or vain complacency. Our victory is to be attributed to the goodness of God, to whom we owe ardent acts of thanksgiving.

Twenty-ninth Means.—To strengthen the soul for the endurance of contempt it would be well in time of peace to draw all the advantage possible from what we have already sustained. For this we lay down the following rules:

1. To forget the good we have done our neighbor; or, if we retain some re-

membrance of it, to diminish it as much as possible by attributing it to others. Better still, let us refer it all to God as the chief Author, and look for neither gratitude nor return from men.

2. To forget the evil done us ; or, if we believe its remembrance more useful to us, let us, with the advice of our director, bear it in mind, diminishing it, however, by the thought that were it proportioned to our deserts it should have been immeasurably greater. To this remembrance join acts of loving acceptance, recognizing with humble submission that to God Himself are we indebted for this opportunity to practise virtue. Perhaps we have never practised these acts of acceptance which holy souls are accustomed to make in moments of humiliation. Let us now repair the past. Such acts will amply supply for our want of virtue and fidelity on former occasions, and will enable us to act in a more Christian manner for the future.

We should never lose sight of the good our neighbor does us, nor of the evil we have caused him. We should often recall both the one and the other, setting forth in the strongest light the one, with a view to humble ourselves by the acknowledgment of our unworthiness; the other, to humble ourselves still more by the sight of our great wickedness. The first consideration should excite our gratitude, the second incite us to repair by every means in our power the wrong we have done our neighbor. A very good way to do this is to receive whatever contempt may be shown us as a punishment due to our past faults.

Thirtieth Means.—To make progress in the love of contempt it is highly important to utilize the little humiliations that occur so frequently in the course of life, and of which we generally make so little account. These words of Jesus Christ, "He that is faithful in that which is least is

faithful also in that which is greater,"* ought to exert a powerful influence to make us profit by such occasions of practising virtue. Great outrages are, for the generality of souls, as rare as they are extraordinary, whilst small ones are ordinary and very frequent. How can he that despises the latter ever advance in the knowledge of self? How will he contract the holy habit of humbling himself? How will he insensibly familiarize himself with what nature so abhors, contempt of self? The strictest vigilance is necessary to profit by the various contradictions which beset one's path, and which may all be turned to advantage in the pursuit of which we treat. Fidelity to seize such occasions, small though they be, will prevent falls to the opposite side, namely, into the sin of pride.

Here we might cite numerous examples to illustrate what has just been said, but

* St. Luke xvi. 10.

let one or two suffice. Their very simplicity will make them more imitable. In a certain religious house of women lived a holy soul remarkable for her uniform humility. One day, at recreation, the word went laughingly around as to who excelled in needlework. Suddenly the Superioress called out in a severe tone to the Sister of whom we speak, "Sister N——, I saw some of your work to-day, and it was shocking. I never expected to see such sewing from your hands. I hope never to have to wear any of your mending." Not a word from Sister N——, whose face wore as cheerful a smile as ever. One of the Sisters seized an opportunity before the close of the assembly to say in a low tone to the Sister accused: "It could not have been any of your work. You never do so-and-so!" "Hush, hush! not a word," whispered the good Sister. "Do not deprive me of this little coin sent me by our Lord." The Sister had said truly.

The work so decried was not Sister N——'s.

And how many such *coins* did not the subject of the following example pick up in her daily round of little duties? She was a religious of eminent holiness, and had passed years in the discharge of the highest employments in her convent. Almighty God permitted that she should be removed from her charge and given as assistant to a very old Sister whose age and infirmities rendered her wholly unfit for any duty. The former had all the anxiety, trouble, and fatigue of the office, added to which she was obliged at the same time to render an exact account of every tittle connected with it. She often spent a whole hour explaining to the old Sister, whose mental faculties were not just then at their brightest, some business affair that had been transacted in a few minutes. If circumstances called for a change in the instructions received, she

was forced to go at once to acquaint the head officer and receive her permission. And this was done by the brave young religious as cheerfully, as graciously, as deferentially as if she were submitting to Jesus Christ Himself.

Thirty-first Means.—We may profit also by the contempt to which our relatives or our fellow-religious are subjected. Such affronts we may appropriate to ourselves, considering them in some sort offered to ourselves personally. We may persuade ourselves with certain humble souls that such or such persons, such or such communities, all of whom we tenderly love, are perhaps afflicted on our account, vilified and despised because of their connection with us. We may indulge the salutary thought that the many and weighty reasons for despising us flow by their excess upon all with whom we have anything to do; that these humiliations happen to them by a terrible effect of God's

justice. More than once has He visited the sins of the fathers upon the children, those of superiors on their subjects, and reciprocally. "I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."* Witness also the seventy thousand struck by pestilence in punishment of King David's sin in numbering his people: "And the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, . . . and there died of the people . . . seventy thousand men."†

Thirty-second Means.—The constant exercise of holy compunction and penitence,

* Exod. xx. 5. † 2 Kings xxiv. 15.

"When God causes the effects of His indignation to be felt even by those that have taken no part in the sin He does them no injustice, since in His eyes they are guilty of other trespasses. They ought not to complain. The temporal pain that God inflicts upon them is for them a trial, and it may become for them an occasion of merit if borne with patience" (Note of Martini upon Josue vii. 1.)

above all, of interior penitence, is a most efficacious means of obtaining love of contempt. When this penitence is sincere it greatly abases and humbles the soul, presenting to it in a sensible manner the chastisements merited by its sins. He that is conscious of having offended God by a mortal sin and thereby merited hell, ah ! does he not ever carry around with him the sad remembrance of his fall? Did not the royal penitent David declare that *his sin was always before him.**

Thirty-third Means.—The reflection in the preceding means must not be made lightly or in passing. He who by sin has failed in respect to God (and all have been thus unfortunate by reason of the original prevarication) has radically lost, and that for ever, all right to his own honor and reputation ; nay more, he has merited eternal disgrace and opprobrium according to the decree pronounced by God Himself :

* Ps. l. 5.

“They that despise Me shall be despised.”* And although man may hope, by the mercy of God and sincere penance, to receive pardon for his sins, yet he ought to maintain a lifelong remembrance of the same. He is certain of having rendered himself infamous and abominable; but, unless by a special revelation, he cannot be equally certain of pardon. Again, his sins and the contempt which they entail are his and all his, but pardon, justification, restoration to the friendship and sonship of God are bestowed upon him as a pure gift. They are the effect of a good Father’s liberality and mercy; they are not his by right. Such sentiments animated the saints when they deemed themselves unworthy of honors and worthy only of opprobrium. Some of them were, however, divinely assured of pardon for their offences. Listen to the great St. Paul: “I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I perse-

* 1 Kings ii. 30.

cuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am." *

A man's worth consists in what he has of himself and not in what he holds of another; therefore, let him who has ever had a grievous sin upon his conscience weep and groan without ceasing. Let him acknowledge that contempt and humiliation are indeed his by right. Ah! such a one surely will not find too heavy the light and passing humiliations that God sends him in this life instead of the everlasting pains and ignominy of hell.

And suppose a soul so happy as never to have sinned grievously. Has that soul no venial offences? Has it never been ungrateful toward its Creator? Has it never deserved to be deprived of those graces that prevent mortal transgressions? Oh! will not such a soul kiss and bless the hand that strikes?

Thirty-fourth Means.—Let him that seeks

* 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10.

to walk in the royal road of the cross, of self-contempt, carefully make to God a just share of all his actions and undertakings. As all kinds of goods flow from God as from their true and only source, to Him, consequently, "belong honor, praise, and glory.*" When these qualities are found in a man's actions let them be unhesitatingly referred to their true owner; but for himself let him reserve only *confusion and contempt*, † on account of the innumerable defects that God discovers even in his best efforts. This practice will little by little detach us from love of self and familiarize the soul with the contrary affection. From whatever side contempt may come, then, it will be cheerfully received. It will, with the help of God, become incorporated into our being as an excellent nourishment, well suited to our deserts.

Thirty-fifth Means.—When once detached from self it is very easy to keep

* 1 Tim. i. 17. † Dan. ix. 7.

God alone in view, to seek but His sole glory, to make Him the end of all our actions. The farther a man is removed from self, the nearer he approaches to God. The more closely he is united to the Sovereign Good the more self-love is weakened and diminished. It is replaced by forgetfulness and a holy hatred of self, which leads most efficaciously to the love of contempt.

Thirty-sixth Means.—The constant attention to the presence of God, the care to keep ourselves always under the eyes of His infinite greatness and majesty, will greatly aid in the acquiring of self-contempt. We never know so clearly the nature and quality of two opposite extremes as when we bring them together. So, a miserable creature like man, continually mindful of the presence, continually under the eye of an infinitely great, an infinitely powerful, Creator, by the light surrounding that exalted Majesty discovers his own in-

comprehensible littleness, his misery, his nothingness, and necessarily conceives the love of self-contempt. It was by this means, as St. Bernardin of Siena teaches, that the Blessed Virgin Mary penetrated more deeply than any other pure creature into the knowledge of her nothingness, into the love of self-contempt.*

It cannot be doubted that in faithfully employing this practice of the Blessed Virgin a Christian will reap the same fruit as she, self-knowledge and self-contempt. Let him, then, with lively faith, be mindful of the presence of God, incomprehensible in purity, sanctity, goodness, and every other perfection. In the splendor of this light he will behold his own stains and sinful deformity; he will blush, despise himself, and conceive the love of self-contempt.

Thirty-seventh Means.—In a short time we shall be cited to render a rigorous ac-

* Tom. 2, serm. 51, art. 3.

count of our life. Who will be our judge? Who will decide our fate? Who will reward us with eternal happiness in heaven or sentence us to eternal misery in hell? Ah! it will be none other than that *God* who was pleased to clothe himself with our nature, that *Man* who was despised by the world, that *God-Man* whom His enemies drenched with ignominy and contempt. How shall we appear before this great Judge if during life we have stood upon points of honor, if we have been punctilious and sensitive, if we have taken things in bad part, if we have been the enemies rather than the friends of self-contempt? How shall we stand before a Judge who, though infinite sanctity itself, delivered Himself to all kinds of contempt, who loved humiliations through His love for us and His great desire to teach us? What shall we answer—we, who on account of our sins are deserving of every species of humiliation, but who, notwith-

standing, refuse to endure the least for love of Him who has so loved us? O God, what confusion, what bitter regret will then be ours!

But what confidence, what consolation shall not he experience before his Judge who during life has loved contempt! He will present himself before Jesus Christ clothed in His own likeness, like Him once despised, now like Him to be glorified. The sweet words of his Redeemer will sound in his ears to fill up the measure of his joy: "And you are they who have continued with Me in my temptations: and I dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a kingdom." *

Happy he that reflects seriously upon these thoughts and profits by them!

Thirty-eighth Means.—He that truly loves contempt never flees from it. It must be a very grave reason that would lead him to shun an occasion to endure it; above

* St. Luke xxii. 28.

all does he take care not to abandon the holy duties of his state or profession through fear of humiliation there to be found. May Heaven preserve us from imitating the Prophet Jonas, whom the Lord commanded to preach in Ninive ! "Yet forty days and Ninive will be destroyed."* Knowing well that Almighty God in His infinite goodness is ever willing to revoke the death decree on the sinner's repentance, and fearing to pass for an impostor, a false prophet, and so lose his reputation, Jonas was unwilling to obey. What was his punishment? He was cast into the sea by the permission of God and swallowed alive by one of the monsters of the deep. Did not Jonas prove by his refusal to obey that he preferred his own honor to that of God? Did he not love himself more than the Supreme God?

He that prefers a created good or even

* Jonas iii. 4.

- compares a created good to God is not worthy of God. He is lost ; he is a reprobate if, when the Saviour demands it, he does not despise himself and all his pretensions to honor. To wait for an absolute command to tread our honor under foot would show but feeble love to the Infinite Goodness. No ; one sign, one interior movement of the Holy Spirit should be sufficient to make us resolve to surmount every repugnance, run any risk, real or apparent, when there is question of pleasing God or contributing to His glory.

Far from us that accursed human respect which would hinder our working for the honor of God ! Let the world say what it will, let it mock and ridicule, let it treat us as blind and insensible, but let us courageously accomplish what our Heavenly Father exacts of us. If from our good works we reap only the dreaded contempt, let us not give way to sadness

and complaints ; let us not imitate the Prophet Jonas. When he saw that God spared the Ninivites on account of their penitential works Jonas was angry, for he feared to pass for an impostor or visionary. *He was exceedingly troubled and was angry, and he desired his death of the Lord.** He felt unable to brave the disgrace that he thought was in store for him. Do not let us resemble Jonas. If our good works entail contempt, let us accept it gladly. Let us, in imitation of our Lord, go on even more courageously. Jesus approaching Jerusalem, in a few days to be the theatre of His profound humiliation, *walked with a quicker step*, hastened to the city cheerfully and eagerly, a little in advance of His timid and astonished disciples.†

He that, far from shunning contempt, is ever in a disposition to receive it ; he that goes to meet it ; he that excites his

* Jonas iv. 1, 2, 3. † St. Mark x. 32.

soul to hunger and thirst for opprobrium ; he that desires it with ardor, seeks it eagerly, seizes it with avidity, trembles with joy when it falls plentifully upon him, as we read of the Apostles : “ *They, indeed, went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus,*” * — he is a worthy imitator of his crucified King, he advances with giant strides toward the perfection of the love of self-contempt.

Should the pious reader feel not as yet this spirit in his soul, let him ask it ardently of our Lord and use every effort to obtain it. His earnest seeking will very much please God. This effort on his part must, however, be in accordance with Christian prudence. No fault must be committed for this end, nor even what could bear the semblance of a fault or become a cause of scandal to the weak and imperfect. In this seeking after contempt and humili-

* Acts v. 41.

ation care must be taken not to give the neighbor the smallest occasion of offending God.

Thirty-ninth Means.—Following out the foregoing means, let the fervent aspirant after the love of contempt dispose himself in all circumstances of life to receive humiliation. In going to and fro from place to place, commencing some work, undertaking some business, treating with his neighbor, let him be ever on the lookout to lay up in his spiritual warehouse some little treasure of humility. This will soon come easy to him that bears in mind the title to contempt inherent in his nature. As with a man covered with leprosy, wherever he goes he bears it with him. Behold how St. Francis de Sales could turn to account even the contradictions of those that loved him best! When quite ill of a fever the saint received a summons to the dying bed of one of his parishioners. The weather was cold, and his friends loudly protested

against his exposing himself. But St. Francis was not to be deterred from what he looked upon as duty. As he mounted his horse he remarked playfully: "Yes, yes, you are right in condemning my going on horseback. Were I a shepherd full of fervor in my Divine Master's service I should go on foot through ice and snow for the good of His dear sheep. Blessed be the kindness of my Master and Lord! He pities my weakness; He is willing that I should go on horseback!"

Fortieth Means.—The occasions to increase these spiritual treasures are not wanting to him that knows how to profit by every contradiction. Where is the man to whom all other men conform in sentiment, desire, and will? Where is he that has no contradiction, no opposition to suffer? Divine Providence permits prejudice and aversion to encounter prejudice and aversion for this sole reason, that the one may act as a refining fire upon the other.

In such occurrences let us instantly enter into ourselves. If the contradiction gives us pain, let us say generously : "Am I not deserving of contempt ? Have I not a thousand titles to abjection and disgrace ? Why should I expect attention to be paid to my inclinations and desires ? The very fact of their being *mine* is sufficient to render them of no account. Or, if they do receive some attention, it should be only to contradict and despise them, to treat them as absolutely unworthy of utterance, as vile streams from a poisoned source, fruits of a decayed tree, containing in themselves the infection of their origin."

In this practice is found a double advantage, the frequent exercise of the love of self-contempt and the putting to death of one's own judgment, two things infinitely precious in the spiritual life.

Forty-first Means.—If it should happen, though such a state is rare, that the occasions for laying up the treasure of humil-

iation do not fall in our way, let us without trouble or disquietude regard it as a great misfortune. He that deserves contempt (and who does not deserve it?) will have to satisfy Divine Justice in the next life for what is left uncanceled in this.

What is to be done in such a case? Let the want of exterior humiliation be supplied by acts of sincere self-abasement before God. Let the want of humiliation be a source of humiliation, since we are unworthy to discharge, even at so small a cost, the enormous debts we have contracted. But supposing not only the absence of humiliation, but also the actual possession of honors, dignities, all kinds of prosperity—what then? Oh! then, above all is this interior self-abasement necessary that pride may not creep in to chill the fervor of the spirit. “The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things.” *

Forty-second Means.—When contempt fails

* Ecclus. iii. 20.

us, let us reflect upon the innumerable multitude of God's chosen ones *that have been, that are, and that, in ages yet to come, will be the objects of contempt and opprobrium, despite the innocence and holiness of their lives.* Think of those souls of whom the world has never been worthy, those souls that it deserves not, that it never will deserve to possess; of those souls who on account of the weakness of their nature feel keenly the bitterness, the indignity of the calumnies and opprobrium with which they are laden, but who, notwithstanding, endure it willingly, lovingly, thankfully.

Ah! what are we in the presence of such souls! Let us deem ourselves unworthy to kiss their footsteps; let us contemplate their blessed lot with envy. They are God's noble children, they are exalted in His sight by being made like unto their brother, Jesus Christ. And we! O that we might hope one day to imitate them!

Whilst awaiting that blessed hour let us unite with them in spirit, compassionate their sufferings, ask God to strengthen and console them, and do for them, as far as we can, all that Christian charity may suggest.

It is recorded of the great St. Francis de Sales that, whilst praying one day in the catacombs, a friend entered unexpectedly and found him bathed in tears. Upon inquiring whether Francis had heard bad news from home, he received this answer: "No, no, my tears are not for such a cause. I weep over my own unworthiness when I pray upon the tombs of those that were so happy as to shed their blood for the faith. O how desirable is martyrdom! I humble myself, for, sinner that I am, I do not deserve the graces of these holy favorites of God!"

If we encounter souls lying under the ban of disgrace for faults of which they really are guilty and who endure it pa-

tiently, this too may be for us matter of humiliation. We may reflect that although these persons deserve far less than ourselves to be despised, yet they have been so fortunate as to have obtained the means of purifying themselves of which we are deprived. Almighty God foresees, no doubt, that if we were put to the trial of contempt, instead of expiating past faults we should but multiply them by new ones. Our weakness, impatience, and pride would never stand the test. Another salutary thought—perhaps it is because our arrogance is so manifest, so well known, that those around us abstain from openly reprehending and despising us. They fear making us fall into explosions of pride and rage; they fear to stir a stagnant pool which, if touched even lightly, will poison the surrounding atmosphere with its fetid exhalations.

If, on the contrary, we meet souls impatient under the rod of humiliation, let

us not despise them. This is a point of the greatest importance. We shall develop it further on.

One of the rocks upon which weak souls not yet grounded in humility often dash, is the flattering conceit that they are quite incapable of the disorders they perceive in their neighbor. This thought makes them despise the guilty. It sometimes inspires so great anger and aversion as to cause them to lose their peace of mind, neglect vigilance over self, and forget their own defects and miseries. In this state pride fomented, the love of self-contempt is cooled if not wholly lost, and at times it happens that the neighbor is formally despised.

The remedy for this misfortune may be drawn from what could in itself cause death. Powerful motives for self-humiliation may be found even in that which could increase pride—behold them:

1. Our neighbors' sins and weaknesses should serve for our own greater humilia-

tion, since we see in their disorders of what man is capable. Were we in their place, were we not constantly assisted by God's most powerful grace, we might fall into the same or even greater excesses. What so true as these words of the great St. Augustine: "There is no sin that one man has committed which might not be committed by another man if He who made and governs man came not to his aid."* In another place the same holy Doctor tells us: "We ought to be as grateful to God for preservation from the sins we have not committed as for the pardon of those which we have committed." †

2. We have already proved that he that loves truth, humility and God, ought to be persuaded that no one on earth but himself is really worthy of contempt. As self-contempt conforms to Jesus Christ, so the contempt of one's neighbor renders a

* Serm. de Verbis Evang. Lucæ vii. 6.

† Serm. 351, de Pœnis.

soul guilty in the sight of God. When tempted to yield to such thoughts, make use of the following reflection :

“If I should see a fellow-creature whom I ought to honor and esteem fall into enormous excesses, what must I do? I must abase myself more profoundly than ever that, as justice demands and according to this principle, *It is I that ought to be the object of every kind of contempt*, I may take my proper place below my erring brother. Then I ought to hold myself in readiness to receive whatever humiliations may present themselves either to obtain the grace not to fall into similar faults or to impetrate pardon for the unhappy one.

The foregoing practice will not only ward off those promptings of pride that arise at the sight of our neighbors' disorders, but will also powerfully contribute to perfect us in contempt of ourselves.

Forty-third Means. — Perfect obedience,

even in the smallest points, is a most excellent practice of humility. By this virtue we make to God the sacrifice of our own will and judgment, and speedily arrive at that point at which we despise what we before loved, namely, our own mind, our inclinations, and our will.

Again, to undertake cheerfully and joyfully the lowest, the vilest, the most fatiguing labors, the most repugnant to our natural inclinations, is a short road to the love of self-contempt. Let us willingly perform what others cannot nor will not do, take for ourselves always the worst of everything, choose the last place everywhere, and leave to others whatever is honorable, advantageous or agreeable. "Sit down in the last place," * says our Lord. And again: "Unless ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." †

Let us serve others, supply for others, condescend to others. Let us look with

* St. Luke xiv. 10. † St. Matt. xviii. 3.

horror upon that wish, so natural to us, to domineer over those with whom we live; let us be subject to them, and prefer to ourselves every one without exception, how wicked or miserable soever he may be. "In humility let each esteem others better than himself," * says the great Apostle. Let us in all things and upon all occasions be the last to speak (unless some good reason reverses this order) and the first to be silent, the first to acknowledge ourselves in the wrong, the first to salute, the first to dissipate any feeling of bitterness in the heart of our neighbor, although we may be the injured party; the first to ask pardon, to make satisfaction, to confess ourselves in fault. Let us keep silence upon affronts received, never raise our voice to domineer over the opinions of others, never boast of ourselves nor of what belongs to us, never speak of our relations but for just reasons. Convinced that a man of good

* Philip. ii. 3.

sense never speaks of vile and despicable objects, we shall, for very evident reasons, refrain from speaking of ourselves. The same consideration will render us very reserved in giving advice to others or in trying to draw them to our way of thinking. Let us be enemies to this word, *I will* ; let us love subjection, dependence, advice, and correction ; let our manner, our walk, our whole deportment be as humble and moderate as possible ; and, finally, let our dear aim be to spare all around us the least vexation or pain.

It is by such practices and a thousand others like them that the love of self-contempt is to be awakened and nourished in the soul. They should all be regulated by prudence and discretion ; the exterior act should spring from the interior sentiment of a heart humbled before God, which seeks much less to appear abject than to be judged abject. Exterior acts performed in this spirit will serve as steps

to mount to the most perfect interior annihilation before God. This good Master is accustomed to help powerfully those that do all they can (His grace always supposed) to attain to this high perfection.

Forty-fourth Means.—True lovers of contempt have always some ingenious means to attract humiliations upon themselves, especially at times when they experience a dearth of such opportunities. In their own defects and imperfections they seek and find what they so long for. Who is not subject to many defects arising from his own nothingness? Who has not some defects of soul and body, defects of constitution, defects of conduct and manner, defects of person and countenance, defects in parents and relatives? O how greatly may they that love contempt profit by such occasions! Such souls, far from concealing or disguising these defects, will make them known simply and naturally. This, however, must not be

done to the injury of another, but only to the prejudice of one's own pride.

Thus, he that through love for his God ardently longs to humble himself* can make use of ridiculous and inopportune questions, inconsiderate actions and gestures, silence on certain occasions, and a hundred other little resorts which his desire of humiliation can inspire, in order to draw upon himself the contempt of others. Such conduct will result in his being looked upon as a sot, an impolite fellow, an ignoramus, destitute of memory and ability, of spirit and courage, of prudence and foresight, in short, of the judgment proper to one of his age and position. He may sometimes speak of his incapacity for a multitude of things, his ignorance on an infinity of subjects, of his low birth and poverty. And whilst thus drawing contempt upon himself he must with

* Remark that the author says a little further on that gravity in speech and action is inculcated by the Apostle in several places of his writings as essential to Christian morals.

equal ingenuity hide whatever might attract the least commendation. All the above supposes, however, that the glory of God and charity do not suffer thereby. The blessed bishop, St. Alphonsus da Liguori, knew well how to practise this kind of humility. It is recorded in his life that he wore his cassocks until his companions, even the humblest, were quite ashamed of him ; and his other clothes were in keeping with the cassock. His rosary was of wood, similar to those used by the poor. "Old things," he said with a smile, "suit an old bishop."

Man has also far more serious defects : namely, his sins against God. He may, again, in proper time and place, make use of them to disabuse his friends of the good opinion they may have of him, and make them regard him as a vile, undeserving creature.

St. Philip Neri, that great lover of contempt, was admirable in the foregoing practices. He knew how to resort to a thousand

stratagems to gain a reputation for ignorance and stupidity. St. John of God, St. Simon Salo, St. John Colombino, also excelled in the same.

But these examples are not to be imitated indifferently, or at least in their full extent. It might not be proper for one to go so far without a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and it is absolutely necessary that such things should be regulated by Christian prudence, discretion, and obedience. We cite them merely to encourage souls to exercise themselves in similar practices on proper occasions when other means fail. If one accustoms himself to such things, he will soon be able to endure the reproaches and slights of others, though much more painful and difficult to bear.

Forty-fifth Means.—To succeed in this enterprise, let us recur to the counsel of St. Philip Neri: "To despise, being despised." * When contempt received awakens

* *Spernere sperni.*

some emotion in our breast, let us make no account of it, let us despise, being despised. Interior acts must here come in, and we must acknowledge ourselves deserving of still greater opprobrium. It is in this, according to Hugh of St. Victor, that true humility consists.

As it often happens that the remembrance of an affront which has been borne in silence lingers in the mind for days and even months, we should resolutely and courageously turn our thoughts from such reflections to indifferent things. To this the author most earnestly exhorts his readers.

St. Teresa says that frequent acts of love toward God soften the heart. The same is true of frequent acts of the love of contempt. Let us never weary of making them; let us never say, "It is enough, I can do no more." If we relent in this, our fervor will cool. If we leave our self-love in peace, it will soon return to the combat more vigorous than ever. A cessation

of hostilities has often deprived a soul of the fruits of long and earnest efforts. In this struggle victory follows perseverance alone. Every day, every hour must see us beginning anew. These acts of love must be sustained by lively hope in God, the armor and support of holy humility. By the continued practice of these two virtues we shall at last distrust self to confide entirely in God, humble self to glorify God, fly from self as from a cruel monster to abyss ourselves in God, our sovereign and only Good.

Forty-sixth Means.—Should the practice just laid down seem to us too difficult, too subjecting, on account of its continuance, its direct opposition to man's condition and inclinations, let us engrave in diamond characters these words of Jesus in the depths of our heart: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." *

* St. Luke ix. 23.

O words to be ever before our eyes ! O words to be ever in our thoughts ! He that ceases to wage continual war against self must also renounce the privilege of following our Lord. O great God ! perish rather pride and self-love than that we should ever cease to be the followers of Thy Divine Son.

Forty-seventh Means.—Do we need courage to persevere in the love of contempt ? Do we need strength ? Behold whence we shall draw both strength and courage : from the lively, affectionate, and constant remembrance of Jesus, the most innocent, the “most beautiful of the children of men” ; from Jesus, humbled for us even to the death of the cross ; from Jesus, the Divine Model to whom we must all be conformed.*

Union with Jesus must be infinitely advantageous, since all heavenly graces and inspirations flow from His cross as from

* Heb. xii. 2.

their source. The more, then, a Christian is attached thereto the more does he participate in the true good, the more glory does he find in humiliations. O that all Christians would reflect seriously on this great truth !

Jesus is our Sovereign Lord and God. He is consequently a good of infinite price. We are His miserable servants and before Him we are nothing. Now, if a sovereign so powerful has deigned to be drenched with opprobrium for love of us, what ought His wretched slave to do? If He who is *all* annihilates Himself, shall not he that is *nothing* rejoice in being treated as such? "The servant," says our Lord, "is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me they will also persecute you." * "Where I am there also shall My servant be." †

Jesus, infinitely holy and innocent, because He had taken upon Himself the ap-

* St. John xv. 20. † St. John xii. 26.

pearance of a sinner, "became the opprobrium of men and the outcast of the people." * He plunged into an ocean of ignominy to satisfy Divine Justice for sins not His own, and will not the sinner in reality, he whose offences are more numerous than the hairs of his head, resolve to endure some little humiliation in order to cancel his enormous debt to God? O that it were given us to share the sentiments of the good thief dying at the side of Jesus! "We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done no evil." † If such are not our sentiments, should not these words of Jesus inspire us with terror: "If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" ‡ "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps." || Ah, let us humble ourselves with Jesus!

* Ps. xxi. 7.

† St. Luke xxiii. 41.

‡ St. Luke xxiii. 31.

|| 1 St. Peter ii. 21.

When we meet contempt and poor nature feels the sting, let us as quickly as possible take our stand in spirit by the cross of Jesus. This practice is essential to the profiting by such occasions. "Think diligently," says St. Paul, "upon Him that endured such opposition for sinners against Himself." *

Comparing our humiliations with those of Jesus, what shall we find? Shall we not discover that Jesus is the only one actually despised? Shall we not discover that, compared with Him, we are treated with consideration, as people of some distinction? And how was the dear Saviour treated? Was it not, as He says Himself, as "a worm and no man"? Ah! our complaints should tinge our cheek with shame. They show that the faith within us is very weak, that we either know not Jesus Christ, or that we are demented.

These glances at the Crucified must not

* Heb. xii. 3.

be hurried and, as it were, merely in passing. We should gaze long and earnestly at that dear Form until It is deeply engraven on our heart. This should be our habitual practice even in time of peace. Each glance will infuse new strength into the soul, and when the moment of trial comes, with our mental gaze turned upon Jesus agonizing, we shall instantly cry out in the depths of our heart: "My beloved has endured far more for me! What I suffer is nothing."

Courage, dear Christian! To Calvary, to Calvary! Thither let us eagerly turn our steps, there let us stand at the feet of our annihilated Saviour! Ah, "it is good for us to be here,"* whilst life endures! How perfectly this divine fire is kept alive by the sacred wood of the cross we shall learn by blessed experience.

Forty-eighth Means.—Especially must he that would cultivate the love of self-con-

* St. Mark ix. 4.

tempt lead as much as possible the hidden life, the life hidden in God. We must consider self as altogether useless, as one too many upon the face of the earth, as entirely dead to the world. We should exult in being looked upon as nothing. Are we sinners? Have we ever sinned? Then let us rejoice in being treated as what we really are by those with whom we live. Listen to St. Paul: "You are dead and your life is hidden with Jesus Christ in God."* Listen to the author of the *Imitation*: "Love to be unknown and reputed as nothing."† Look at Jesus and Mary. Did they shun the gaze of the world? Did they bury their actions in obscurity? When the glory of God, the good of the neighbor, or Christian prudence does not demand otherwise, let us imitate their example. Should, contrary to our deserts, praise, applause, approbation be offered to us, let us turn them off by at-

* Coloss. iii. 3. † *Imitation of Christ.*

tributing to God all the merit of what we have done. Let us declare that our success is mostly owing to the help and encouragement we have received from others. Thus did Jesus act. The prodigies that He effected upon the souls and the bodies of men He attributed to *their faith and love*,* overlooking the fact that He Himself had infused those blessed dispositions into their heart.

O Jesus, best of Masters! when shall we imitate Thy touching example?

When our neighbor is humbled before us, we may, like watchful speculators, turn his humiliation to our own advantage. By secret, interior acts of acceptance, we may share the booty, and drive the dagger once again into our pride and self-love.

Fidelity to the hidden life, whilst fostering the love of self-contempt, will draw upon us the abundant graces of our Father in heaven. He loves to reward the

* St. Luke vii. 47.

good works of those that live despising self, ignored and far from the applause of men. What does His Divine Son say on this point? "And thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee." *

Forty-ninth Means.—Interior humiliation is at all times necessary to man. But with far greater fidelity ought he to practise it when he is abased and humbled directly by God Himself. If in such a conjuncture one could without the least fault free himself from blame and escape disgrace, he ought not to do it, unless by an express manifestation of the will of God. To seek to rise from such abasement would be to thwart the designs of God for His own glory and our good. This humiliation, this disgrace may be the means He employs to raise the soul to eminent holiness. O what an irreparable loss to oppose the Heavenly Artificer! to destroy the work of that Hand infinitely skilful and powerful! Ah! if we

* St. Matt. vi. 4.

duly considered the inestimable advantages hidden in such trials, far from wishing to be freed from them, we should ardently desire to live and die in them! When the Mighty Hand presses upon us, let us unite with God in a holy league against ourselves. The Holy Spirit says in Ecclesiasticus: "Join thyself to God, and endure."*

Passive submission to the action of God upon us is not sufficient in such cases; voluntary acts of the deepest humility should accompany it. Away all tenderness for self! Away every pretext of self-love! Away every desire after the sympathy of others! In a soul filled with such sentiments of heroic courage Almighty God can do more in one day toward building it up in perfection than He could do in ten years in the ordinary course of things. This St. Paul tells us when he says: "For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God"† and great

* Ecclus. ii. 3. † Rom. viii. 14.

saints. In this way is accomplished a work worthy of the Sovereign Artist, a work that will endure for all eternity. In this way will God do great things in us.

Fiftieth Means.—And now, dear reader, let us recall this beautiful word of St. Bernard: "God willed that we should have nothing that has not passed through the hands of Mary," * the most humble of His creatures. Think, too, of the advice St. Philip Neri so earnestly repeated to his disciples: "Believe me, my children, for I am certain that there is no more efficacious means to obtain favors from God than to ask them through the intercession of His most holy Mother." †

O let us then recur to her mediation!

* St. Bern., Serm. Vigilia Nativ. Domini, No. 10.

† This is to be understood in no way derogatory to the infinite plenitude of Jesus Christ's mediation. He is, as faith teaches, our only and necessary Mediator. In spite of His own sufficiency, and although none other could take His place, He is, nevertheless, pleased, in order to honor His blessed Mother and for our special advantage, to give her to us as our powerful Mediatrix with God.

Let us confide in her power and win her protection by our filial homage. Let us implore her to obtain from God for us the inestimable gift of the love of self-contempt. Who, after Jesus, ever loved contempt more than Mary? Did not the opprobrium with which her Divine Son was covered fall back upon her, His holy Mother? Ah, yes, Mary will be our most willing mediatrix! She will obtain for us that rare and precious grace. St. Ambrose knew this well. He invites us to imitate Mary, whilst we implore her aid: "If any one desires the reward of Mary, let him imitate her example."*

It will be a great help, also, to have daily recourse to those saints that have borne a special love to the holy virtue of humility, such as St. Philip Neri, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Francis Borgia, St. John of the Cross, St. John of God, St. Felix, St. Seraphin (the last two holy Capuchins), and others.

* St. Ambrose, lib. 2, *De Virgine*.

ARTICLE VII.

THE FOREGOING MEANS REDUCED TO THREE.

Manner of Practising Them.

IN order to facilitate the practice of the means just enumerated, we shall reduce them to three points which, in some measure, comprise all the rest. They should be constantly in our mind, in our heart, and in our hands as powerful weapons.

First Means.—Fervent, humble, and continued prayer to implore the love of self-contempt from the good, good God who alone can bestow it.

Second Means.—A deep, strong conviction that we deserve contempt. This sentiment, as we have shown, will infallibly give rise to the love of self-contempt.

Third Means.—A constant vigilance to put in practice, upon the various occasions that present themselves, the particular

means laid down in the preceding article for acquiring the love of self-contempt.

Whoever makes a proper use of these three means will assuredly find what he seeks. The measure of his fidelity will be that of his success. We have the promise of God on this point. No day, no hour should pass without our making use of these three means: "Defraud not thyself of the good day, and let not the part of a good gift overpass thee." *

Through the sin of Adam, our inclination for self has become so violent that if we do not several times in the day inflict strong blows upon our pride we can never hope even to weaken it. Unforeseen occasions will arise and we shall succumb to the shock of injuries and humiliation. Prayer, and prayer alone, must be our refuge. We must offer to God a holy violence. He will, at last, as He tells us in the Gospel, yield to the importunity of our de-

* *Ecclus. xiv. 14.*

mand. Hearken to the words of Jesus Christ: "We ought always to pray, and not to faint." *

The love for which we supplicate is a thrice excellent gift of God, the fruit ordinarily of thousands and thousands of actual efforts and of constant perseverance in prayer. We may for days, months, even years exercise ourselves in the meditation of the goods that we possess without any merit of our own and the evils from which we are freed in the same gratuitous way. To the first we may say: "I do not deserve you; I have no right to you"; to the second, "I deserve to suffer these and incomparably greater afflictions."

The love of contempt will become easy in proportion to our fidelity in practising these means. The thought of Jesus laden with opprobrium, the remembrance of the presence of God infinitely great and holy will lead us insensibly to the highest per-

* St. Luke xviii. 1.

fection of this love. Then we shall not only ardently embrace the contempt that falls in our path, but we shall go farther and eagerly serve the authors of it. If occasions do not present themselves, we must seek them ; we must make them, as if we were unable to live without them. Our not being despised does not remove the reasons for which we deserve to be despised, therefore we always bear within us the principle of humiliation.

Happy the Christian that knows how to find in all events occasions to humble himself, and to grow in the love of self-contempt. To render this practice most meritorious, all must be done for the highest motive, that is, through a movement of the pure love of God, and for His glory alone. God is greatly pleased to see His creature abasing himself before Him through a real love of contempt and the desire of the Creator's glory. St. John Chrysostom says that these sentiments are so pleasing

to God that if all mankind had for us the most sincere love and the highest esteem, we should be indebted to God for the honor that we should then receive. But when we are despised for the love of Him, His satisfaction is so great that He becomes, as it were, our debtor.* It is then that a soul is capable of all that God demands of it, then does it belong wholly to God.

* St. J. Chrysostom, Hom. 3 in Ep. ad Titum, No. 3 et 4, ubi his similia.

ARTICLE VIII.

AN EXHORTATION TO ALL CHRISTIANS TO ACQUIRE THE LOVE OF SELF-CONTEMPT.

WE cannot better close this little treatise than by urging all Christians to put their hand courageously to the work, to acquire the holy love of self-contempt. Let them consider, and especially such as have received a call from God to labor more earnestly at their soul's sanctification, that, by neglecting to acquire this love, the inestimable goods and advantages enumerated in Article V. are lost. They will always remain full of defects, slaves to pride and self-love, since not to fight against these vices is not to destroy them. When humiliation comes upon them they will be assailed by temptations so violent to hatred and rancor against the authors of their trial that they will be in danger of losing the grace of God and of being eternally

damned. If their animosity does not extend this far, they will, however, entertain some resentment which will prepare for them a place in the devouring flames of purgatory. He that clings ever so little to pride can never be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. He will never imitate his Master in His favorite virtues, meekness and humility. He will never make progress in Christian perfection, but will always remain groveling upon the earth, without peace of heart, liberty of spirit, or true consolation, a stranger to the special lights and favors of God. In this life he will be deprived of innumerable graces and merits, and in the other of that more brilliant glory that was once destined for him.

He that aims at acquiring this love will reap a rich recompense even in this life in the ineffable goods, the lively hope and assurance of an increase of glory and happiness in eternity. Is it not just that he who has shared more fully in His abase-

ment on earth should participate more abundantly in the triumph of Jesus? Is it not just that he who has been humbled in time should be exalted in eternity? Shall not these Gospel words be fulfilled: "*He that humbleth himself shall be exalted*"? * If they are not verified in this world, they will indubitably be so in heaven, since the word of God is immutable, since it cannot fail to be realized.

If this is true in general of all humiliations received and supported with love, it is true in a still more excellent manner of those voluntarily endured, especially for the cause of God and the defence of truth: "*Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" † On those days on which some humiliation has been suffered, may not the soul fulfil these other words of Christ: "*Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.*" ‡

* St. Luke xiv. 11. † St. Matthew v. 10.

‡ St. Matthew v. 12.

May the Divine Goodness deign to communicate to us light to understand these vital truths and the strength to put them in practice! For this let us plead with sighs and tears, and let us never cease our supplications until we are in blessed possession of the grace we crave, the true love of self-contempt. By frequently renewing our acts of love for this virtue we shall reap four great advantages: namely, *First*, we shall thereby please God more. We shall more intimately unite ourselves to Him who is charity by essence, since "He that dwells in charity dwells in God, and God in him." *

Secondly.—We shall thereby increase our merit for heaven, since the glory of the saints is proportioned to their love of God on earth.

Thirdly.—In proposing this motive to ourselves, the uninterrupted practice of self-contempt, so painful, so difficult in it-

* 1 Ep. St. John iv. 16.

self, will become much sweeter. It is the property of divine love, a sentiment in itself infinitely consoling, to pour its charms over all that is done by its movement and impulse. This St. Augustine and St. Thomas both teach.

Fourthly.—This advantage is a consequence of what precedes. By this means we secure stability and perseverance in this holy exercise. This is for us of the greatest importance ; on the one hand, the difficulties diminish ; on the other, love supplies the strength and courage to resist to the end.

The maxims contained in this treatise are not contrary to the advice given us by the Holy Spirit : "Take care of a good name, for this shall continue with thee more than a thousand treasures precious and great."* Man can receive some injury to his honor, yea, he may even lose it in two different ways : one involuntarily, by a dis-

* Ecclus. xli. 15.

position of Divine Providence, who allows others to outrage and defame him ; the other, by his own free action, contributing to his own dishonor. In the first case, who does not see that the advice of the Holy Spirit and the maxims of prudence can have no place? We should, indeed, take care of our life. God commands us to do so. But it may happen that some one, by divine permission, deprives us of it. Virtue demands in that case that we suffer patiently, that we make a loving offering of it to Jesus, who deigned to give His own for us. This is just what the martyrs did.

Now, let us apply the same reasoning to our honor. If we should lose it in a similar way, it is certain, supposing us faithful to God, that, far from receiving injury either in this life or for the next, we shall reap immense advantages. If the loss of public esteem proves detrimental to our health, our fortune, our temporal interests, we must

have patience and humbly, resignedly, and confidently await God's good pleasure.

If the Christian exposes his honor by voluntary acts suggested and inspired by God, as did many of the saints, among them St. Philip Neri, we must go back to the argument that underlies this whole subject as a foundation: God Himself is the Author of even such humiliations.

We are not, however, to compromise our good name by any criminal action, nor are we to risk it imprudently and inconsiderately. No such counsel is inculcated in this little work. In all such things we must be guided by prudence, discretion, the advice of directors, and prayer. We may guard our reputation carefully, and at the same time love humiliations, by ardently desiring them and often making interior acts of self-abasement before God and man. The greatest friends of Jesus Crucified acted in this way. They were obliged to preserve their good reputation,

the better to procure glory to God by laboring at the salvation of souls. So acted the Apostles and many others of exalted dignity who have followed in their footsteps.

And can we not imitate these illustrious athletes of Jesus Christ in the midst of the glory with which Divine Providence surrounded them? Shall we not, mounting still higher, imitate Jesus Christ Himself, the Only Son of God, begotten from all eternity in the bosom of God the Father, in the splendor of the saints, crowned with immense glory? Shall we not imitate our Sovereign High Priest, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, humbled for us, despised for us, dying in the hands of the executioner upon the infamous gibbet of the cross?

Ah! here we must cease to argue. The thought of Jesus must strengthen us to overcome all opposition, surmount every difficulty.

PRAYER

TO OBTAIN FROM GOD THE LOVE OF SELF-
CONTEMPT.

Altissime Deus! qui de excelso habitaculo tuo humilia respicis, et alta a longe cognoscis, in nomine dilecti Filii tui Jesu, infunde cordibus nostris spiritum humilitatis, propriique contemptus amorem; ut omni prorsus eliminata superbia et radicitus evulsa, eundem Unigenitum tuum pro nobis, usque ad mortem crucis humiliatum, ac opprobrium hominum factum, imitantes in terris exaltari cum ipso mereamur in cœlis, in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

THE SAME IN ENGLISH.

O God of infinite majesty, who from Thy high dwelling-place dost mercifully regard the humble and knowest the proud from afar, in the name of Thy beloved Son, Jesus, pour into our heart the spirit of humility and the love of self-contempt!

Grant that, imitating Him on earth, our pride being cast out and its roots destroyed, we may deserve to be for ever exalted with that same Only-Begotten Son, humbled for us to the death of the cross and made the outcast of men! Amen.

A WORD OF ADVICE TO THE PIOUS READER.

If, in spite of all that has heretofore been said, you still shrink from an enterprise so repugnant to nature; if you hesitate, if you feel in your soul only a weak resolution to put your hand to the work, we conjure you by the love of Jesus not to be discouraged. Courage, dear soul! Confide in Jesus and Mary, and do what in you lies. Arm yourself with faith and prayer, humble yourself as far as your weakness permits, and excite in yourself a strong desire to do better. Persevere in these practices, and by degrees you will

feel your strength increase, your courage roused, and you will surely advance in this blessed road to the death of pride and the birth of divine love in the heart.

We are like frail barks. We cannot sail on the high seas unless by the breath of the Holy Spirit; but let us beware of slighting the divine inspiration. If we do not take advantage of these favorable gales we shall unhappily sustain great loss. We must not put off till the morrow. We must do to-day, yes, at this very moment, all that we can. Our eager correspondence with God's special favors will enlist the Divine Giver in our favor. When He sees that His graces do not lie sterile, He will in ways known to Himself advance us wonderfully in our enterprise.

But should we be deprived of those delightful whisperings of the Holy Spirit, let us redouble our prayers and courageously make use of the means that have impressed us most. They will enable us first

to endure and then to love contempt. Our fidelity will bring with it light, and the breath of the Sanctifier will not fail to fertilize the soil of our heart. "Come, O south wind, blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow!"*

What says the Council of Trent? Listen, timid soul! Will not these words infuse into your heart determination to begin the good work? "God does not command impossibilities, but in giving a command He admonishes you to do what you are able and to seek help for what you cannot do. And He helps that you may be able."† If you never attain the sublime heights to which this love leads, it will still be very meritorious to have mounted even some few steps. For all eternity will the soul bless God for the profit, however small, that it has derived from this thrice glorious exercise.

* Cant. iv. 16. † Conc. Trid. sess. vi. 22.

SUPPLEMENT.

AN EXHORTATION AGAINST CONTEMPT OF THE NEIGHBOR.

MAY it please God that what we have said in the foregoing pages may not incite any one to the sovereignly criminal practice of despising his neighbor! Such a result would be an abuse of a holy and evangelical doctrine. It would be to reap misfortune for one's self from what would contribute to the spiritual harvest of another. That this may not happen, we have thought it advisable to add to our little treatise a few short but solid instructions on the vice opposed to the virtue of which we have hitherto treated: namely, the infamous vice of contempt of the neighbor.

This vice is diametrically contrary to the spirit of God, which is founded on humility and consists in charity. It is written:

"God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble."* And again: "God is charity, and he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him."† And still again: "He that loveth not abideth in death."‡ Now, it is evident that he that despises his neighbor directly transgresses both humility and charity.

First, he attacks humility, since the spirit that animates him springs from pride. Why does he vilify others but in consequence of the madness that urges him to assert some superiority over them? The spirit of domineering always seeks to lower the neighbor. Is it not an effect of manifest pride to place ourselves above others and to establish ourselves their judges? And what is such a judge? A rash, arrogant man that usurps an office confided to him neither by God nor man; a despotic, unreasonable man that abuses the power he has usurped, listens to no reason, laughs at the defence alleged, institutes no examination, seeks no information, consults but

* St. James iv. 6; 1 Ep. St. Peter v. 5.

† 1 Ep. St. John iv. 16. ‡ Ib. iii. 14.

his own caprice, decides according to his own whims—ah! he that despises his fellow-man is a cruel, inhuman monster that sighs but for the condemnation and execution of his victim. He is guilty of all sorts of injustice. If these are not the frightful effects of pride, where shall we find them?

The man that despises his neighbor necessarily forgets his own sins and defects, the knowledge of which would have been a curb to his pride. Self-esteem, self-complacency, self-love, the spirit of haughty domineering, increases at every moment in his heart. He thinks himself superior to others; he is, in his own opinion, a person of rare merit, highly distinguished among men.* Were not these the defects of the proud Pharisee? Listen to his words when he went up into the Temple to pray: "*O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican.*"* In vain shall we seek humility in the heart that despises its brethren. Humility and

* St. Luke xviii. 11.

pride cannot reside together; one is incompatible with the other.

What about Christian charity? Is it, too, destroyed by contempt of the neighbor? Undoubtedly.

Charity has two principal acts, according to the expression of Holy Scripture, two rules to direct its every step: "*Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them*";* and again: "*See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done thee by another.*"† Now, let us ask: Do they that despise their neighbor desire to be despised in return? If they are sincere, they must answer no. In despising others, then, they directly contravene these two maxims of charity, since they are unwilling to accord to their neighbor that for which they are most eager themselves: namely, honor and esteem. And, on the contrary, they inflict upon them that which they in no manner desire for themselves: namely, shame and contempt. Ah! where is their Christian charity? Can it be found in those capricious words and acts that snatch from others their dearest,

* St. Matt. vii. 12.

† Tob. iv. 16.

their most precious goods, such as honor, consideration, peace of heart, tranquillity of life—yes, that even imperil their soul's salvation? It is a well-known fact, proved by experience, that many weak and imperfect souls (and the world is full of such) abandon the path of piety and virtue because unable to endure the contempt of their fellow-men.

How shall we call the following beautiful trait? Is it an example of charity or humility, or does it not breathe of the two combined? A holy priest, being obliged to leave his flock for several months, commissioned some devout friends to look after his poor. Then it was that the good priest's devotedness to his parishioners was discovered. Among them was a poor old bedridden woman living in a wretched cellar. "What does Father T—— do for you, my good woman?" inquired the charitable lady that had taken charge of her.

"Ah, ma'am! Father T—— does for me what an own child sometimes does not do for a parent. He comes here every evening, gets down on his knees to light a

fire on the hearth, makes me a cup of tea, brings it here to my bedside, and sits talking about God and His love for me until I have finished my supper. Ah, ma'am! if it were not for Father T—— I would long ago have rebelled against God's holy will!"

Again, where is charity in the heart of him who adds new burdens to the already heavy loads that many have to bear through life? Where is his charity who, by his contemptuous words and manner, gives his neighbor a thousand occasions for sins of impatience, aversion, hatred, rancor, and even blasphemy? Are not these the fatal effects of contempt of one's neighbor? May we not see them every day? Can the slightest shadow of charity be detected in those that occasion such evils?

What might have been the fate of the young soul mentioned in the following example had she not found among the many with whom she was thrown one heart modelled on that of the Man-God? In a well-known Catholic educational establishment in one of our large cities a poor,

afflicted child was placed by her Protestant mother, a widow. The child's disease rendered her insupportable to all around her. Her smaller companions would push her rudely from them, and the larger ones showed even greater horror at her presence. But in that thoughtless crowd was one more gentle and compassionate than the rest. Drawing the trembling, frightened child toward her, she would comfort and encourage her, and, arm in arm, they often spent their hours of play together. O beautiful sight! May not older and wiser heads learn from this child a lesson?

Now, he that is destitute of humility and charity has not the Spirit of God, has not the least point of resemblance to Jesus Christ. Our Divine Saviour in word and act breathes only the most profound humility, the most tender charity. It is in these two virtues particularly that He desires that we should imitate Him: "*Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart.*"* "*This is my covenant, that you love one another as I have loved you.*"† Does he that despises his neighbor model

* St. Matt. xi. 29.

† St. John xv. 12.

his conduct on these two maxims? No, far from resembling Jesus Christ, do they not portray the characteristics of Anti-christ? Ah! what more deplorable state can be imagined?

Do not allege as an excuse that they that are condemned can draw great advantage from their abjection. Granted that multitudes do so, is it not the advantage that the martyrs gained over their persecutors, the pagan tyrants of old? And have not pious souls reaped, do they not still reap, precious fruits from the temptations and persecutions of demons? Can we look upon those tyrants as faultless, those demons as spiritual benefactors to be rewarded for their deeds? Who would venture to say so? And can we look with a less rigorous eye upon those that despise their neighbor?

The good that is derived from contempt does not originate with him that despises; it springs from a very different source, from the virtue of the wise who, by God's grace, know how to draw good out of evil. They will attain to a very high degree of glory in recompense for

the virtues they shall have practised in abjection, whilst their persecutors shall endure punishment proportioned to the pride and malice which have led them to despise their brethren. The share of each will be just. The Holy Spirit pictures to us in the book of Wisdom the horrible tortures of the latter when they behold the magnificent reward of the former. "A day will come" (the day of general judgment, the great day of eternity) on which the just, despised and persecuted on earth, shall behold their lot wholly changed: *'Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them.'** Then shall they confidently lift up their head, and they shall shine with a light more brilliant than that of the sun. The time for sharing the humiliations of Jesus Christ shall have passed. They will no longer be in danger of losing their soul through pride nor of failing in charity when, with palms in their hands and crowns on their head, they shall in their triumph and glory applaud the terrible de-

* Wisdom v. 1.

cree fulminated against their persecutors by a God-Judge.*

Oh, what misery awaits the haughty contemner of his neighbor on that frightful day! With difficulty will he recognize those that he once despised. On seeing their confidence, their courage, their ineffable glory, he will be seized with amazement. Such a spectacle he never could imagine. He will turn pale and tremble with fear; he will cry out in a heartfelt but useless avowal of his sin. But repentance for them will have been turned into remorse, that "worm which never dieth."

"Are these the men," will such sinners exclaim, "who were once the objects of our scorn, our derision, our raillery and insult?† Are these they whom we once looked upon as vile and ignoble? Are these they whom we once trod under foot as the dust of the earth, whom we loaded with reproaches and injuries? In our eyes their actions were childish and silly, their life a tissue of littleness, a long folly that could end but in shame and dishonor. But, in truth, it is we alone

*Ps. lvii. 11.

† Wisdom v. 1-3.

who were fools; it is we who were in error; it is we who were blind, blind, blind! For us no sun ever shone. These have gained the friendship of God. They are saved. They have risen from humiliation to the glory of the saints, to the rank of children of the Most High. And we, with our pride and pretended grandeur, now vanished like smoke—we knew not how to practise one act of virtue. How have we fallen! We have precipitated ourselves into an abyss a thousand times worse than our original nothingness. Here we shall for ever deplore our irreparable loss.”*

The contemners will now be contemned. But not from the blessed will come the most bitter confusion of the reprobate, not from those that they once hated and despised. Ah! it will be that hurled upon them by an avenging God, a God that resents most terribly an injury done to the least of His little ones.† O frightful chastisement! To be despised by one's own Creator, one's own Redeemer! To experience the contempt of a God of infinite

* Wisdom v. 4 et seq.

† Wisdom iv. 18; Ps. cxviii. 118.

majesty, greatness, power, and justice ! To become the object of His wrath and hatred, not for one moment, not for a determinate period, however long, but *eternally*, for an *eternity*—and this in the horrors of hell—as long as God will be God ! Oh ! who could endure such misery ?

O good Jesus ! Thou who didst open the eyes of the blind, in Thy mercy and love give sight of soul to so many that need it !

O ye who despise your neighbor, give up that malicious pleasure so injurious to God, your neighbor, and yourselves. Resolve quickly, for soon the scene will change. “Woe to thee that despisest ; shalt not thyself also be despised ?” * Ah, yes ! in the frightful pit of hell *will ye be tormented by those things in which ye have sinned.* † Do not delay your conversion. Renounce at once and for ever your detestable vice, lest ye fall into the hands of the living God.

Ecclesiastical history records the story of a libertine who had conceived a violent hatred for a most holy religious. He al-

* Isaias xxxiii. 1.

† Wisdom xi. 17.

lowed no opportunity of giving him pain to pass; but the religious bore all with Christian patience. Obedience having sent the holy man to a distant monastery, his persecutor stood at the window of a house near by to watch his departure and to insult him anew. While he stood giving expression to the joy he felt at seeing the religious leave the convent, what happened? The floor on which he stood gave way and he was buried in the falling debris.

Who would not tremble at the sight of this terrible chastisement of Divine Justice? Weep, weep, and detest sincerely the sins you have committed against God and your neighbor! From a persecutor become one of the persecuted, and receive patiently the contempt that God may allow another or all others to heap upon you. Receive it as a punishment due to your raileries, your insults, your want of reverence toward God, and for the outrages you have shown Him in the person of your neighbor. Make whatever reparation is in your power to those you have injured, and for the future let it be your aim to excel in respect and Christian love towards every one. Turn

against self your unhappy inclination to find fault with, to reprehend, and to cast opprobrium upon others. Be assured you will never fail to find motives for just reprehension, *if you seek them in your own breast.*

CONCLUSION.

All that we have hitherto said^{*} proves that the spirit of Jesus Christ urges the Christian to despise himself and to love to be despised by others. This Divine Spirit wills that he should at all times and under all circumstances testify towards his neighbor esteem, devotedness, and compassion. For this he must forget self and conform to circumstances, always preferring the good of others and practising exactly this advice of the Apostle: "*With honor preventing one another,*"^{*} and "*In humility let each esteem others better than himself.*"[†] Let contempt, disdain, humiliation be for self; let esteem, respect, sweetness, compassion, all the good affections that spring from true love, be for others.

^{*} Rom. xii. 10.

[†] Philip. ii. 3.

All the saints, after the example of Jesus, have been animated by this spirit and have manifested it in a thousand ways. An opposite conduct belongs to the spirit of the demon, to the spirit of Antichrist which enkindles in man's heart self-esteem and an insatiable craving after honor and applause. When this spirit takes possession of a man he becomes a self-seeker in all things and a most rigid censor of his brother. The ties of friendship are snapped, and he dreams but of elevating himself by lowering others. The more the soul removes from God the more attached it becomes to self, the more does it participate in this diabolical spirit. Woe to him in whom it reigns ! Without knowing it, he has within himself a characteristic of eternal reprobation. In the name of Jesus Christ we exhort him to correct this. Unhappy those families, those communities, in which such a spirit dwells ! They are pictures of hell, whence order is banished, wherein only confusion and horror are found.

But happy, a thousand times happy, the families, the communities, in which reigns the spirit of love of self-contempt ! Here

each one is anxious, not for the first, but for the last place; here each seeks what is most vile and abject, leaving what is best and most honorable to his neighbor. In a word, each takes for himself the most uninviting of all things and leaves to his neighbor respect, affection, and friendship. To what a degree of perfection have not such souls attained! Union reigns among them; all tend earnestly to one common centre, their own nothingness; all seek but one good, which is God and God alone. Truly is God the Sovereign Ruler in such a household, for it is written: "God is charity, and he who dwells in charity dwells in God and God in him."* It is a paradise upon earth, a foretaste of that delightful abode where God will be eternally for His elect the All in all.† Happy such a community! Happy they that compose it!

But if, as is too common, this happiness is not the portion of some communities, of some families, and if one of their members has received from God special calls to the highest perfection—if he aims at the love of

* 1 Ep. St. John iv. 16. † 1 Cor. xv. 28.

self-contempt—ah ! for the love of God, let him go on courageously. Let him rejoice that a larger share of contempt—the share rejected by his brethren—falls to his lot. Let him leave to others honor, esteem, satisfaction, affection, commendation, all that the world craves ; let him become a cipher in order to contribute to the glory of others. Ah ! thrice blessed such a life. In it will be verified these words of the Holy Spirit : “ To them that love God all things work together unto good.” * The neglect and indifference of others will be for him a source of spiritual profit. He will bear imprinted upon his forehead and his heart the distinctive characteristic of Jesus Christ, who left to others honor and for Himself chose opprobrium ; who left to others the joys of this world and for Himself chose the cross. He will receive in his state of abasement the most assured pledge of his predestination, and he may confidently hope that for him is reserved one of the most magnificent thrones in the heavenly Jerusalem. Was it this thought that prompted St. Francis

* Rom. viii. 28.

de Sales when he gave utterance to the following:

“All the world over it is considered a crime to hate one’s neighbor; but here where I am it is a crime to love me. Messieurs les C——, men far above reproach, are yet reproached only because they are my fast friends. . . . Ah! a day will come when to love me will no longer be a subject of reproach to any one.”

Who would not at any cost possess so great a good? Here we may apply the words of the sage: “Art is long; life is short.” To acquire the art of loving self-contempt, indeed, takes long; but in the end it is short, for life itself is short. Set to work, confident in the divine aid. Cease not until death lets in upon your soul those floods of light and glory which, as the Royal Prophet sings, will satiate your heart: “I shall be satiated when thy glory shall appear.” *

Fiat! Fiat! Fiat!

All to the greater glory of God!

* Ps. xvi. 15.

AUTHOR'S PROTEST.

The author willingly and humbly submits this little treatise to the judgment of Holy Mother Church and her visible Head. He protests most sincerely that he is ready to renounce his own opinions and judgment as soon as he shall perceive that they are not conformed to the doctrine of the same Holy Church and her venerable Chief Pastor, in whose faith, with the help of God, he wishes to live and die, thus to obtain the mercy of God and His divine love. Amen !

THOUGHTS ON HUMILITY.

FROM "HUMILITY OF HEART" (ELEVENTH EDITION, 1793), BY REV. FATHER GAÉTAN-MIGLIORINI, RELIGIOUS CAPUCHIN.

They that know that they have offended God mortally and still dare to indulge sentiments of pride have never seriously reflected upon what the Holy Spirit says to them by the mouth of St. Paul: "... crucifying again to themselves the Son of God."* What should we say if a hangman frequented some very public walk and by his air and demeanor arrogantly exacted the respectful homage of the passers-by? Would we not think his insolence an effect of insanity? What is the office of the hangman in the eyes of the world? Is it not vile and disreputable? And has not sin reduced us to a still more infamous state? We have joined with the Jews in the crucifixion of our Lord and Redeemer.† We have crucified Him anew as often as we have committed mortal sin. O madness! O blind folly! how can we arrogate to ourselves honor and esteem?

* Heb. vi. 6.

† Isaias liii. 5.

We read in the life of St. Martin, that man of miracles, that so great was his sentiment of respect on entering a church that the hair of his head stood on end. Shall we not be seized with still greater terror when we present ourselves before Him whom we have so often nailed to the cross!

Must not His goodness be infinite, His love immense, to suffer us in His presence, to listen to our petitions? Ah! let us appear before Him only with the sentiments of the publican. From our heart let us say to Him: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner!"*

We are capable of committing all kinds of crime, and we would commit them if the mercy of God did not preserve us from them.

When a tree is so much inclined as to be in danger of falling the gardener props it up with stakes. If it still remains standing and producing fruit, to whom is it indebted? Certainly to the foresight of the gardener and to the prop that supports it. In like manner is it owing to the goodness of God and the power of His grace that we are not sunk in vice, that we still bring forth some fruits of virtue.

* St. Luke xviii. 13.

Have we any idea of the nothingness from which God drew us at our creation? It is only a short time, a few moments as it were, since we came forth from it. Have we ever reflected that if God's mighty Hand did not sustain and preserve us we should fall back into it? How, then, hovering over the abyss of nothingness as we are, how can we be proud?

St. Augustine asks what was the sin that David calls the greatest: "And I shall be cleansed from the greatest sin." * And the holy Doctor answers that *it was pride, a sin truly the greatest, since it was the first and the cause of all sins.* †

God detests pride in the rich; but He hates it still more in the poor: "Three sorts my soul hateth, . . . a poor man that is proud." ‡

Alas! there is no doubt as to my excessive poverty, and a moment's reflection is sufficient to convince me of my pride. I am, then, in the eyes of God an object of detestation.

If God should make use of us for the

* Ps. xviii. 14. † St. Aug. Enarr. in Ps. xviii.

‡ Ecclus. xxv. 4.

spiritual advantage of our neighbor, either by advice, work, or example we should humble ourselves profoundly, since it is of faith that God often chooses as His instruments the vilest of creatures: "And the base things of the world and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to naught things that are." *

If I desire to be an instrument in God's hands for the salvation of others, I must look upon myself as the most miserable thing on earth, I must hide myself in my own nothingness.

Every benefit we receive from God is a debt contracted with Him, a talent confided to us, which we must put out on interest for His honor and glory. Who ever saw a merchant exulting in the multitude and greatness of his debts? We must indeed be strangely blinded by pride when we glory in the gifts of God. Ah! let us rather recall the moment on which we must render an account of their good or bad use: "Pay what thou owest." † "And we shall find," as St. Gregory tells us,

* 1 Cor. i. 28.

† St. Matt. xviii. 28.

"in the talents, the virtues, and every other good with which we may be enriched but the most strenuous motives for humbling ourselves." * Look at that beggar! He has just received a few coins from the hand of a rich man. What heartfelt thanks he utters! He is amazed at the greatness of the benefit; he attributes it all to his benefactor's liberality; he assures him of his lifelong gratitude in expressions simple and unstudied, because prompted by the feeling of his own unworthiness. Ah! what should be our sentiments upon receiving, not some perishable goods from the hand of man, but the inestimable favors of God Himself?

In vain do we take care of the hands and dial of a time-piece if we neglect the works within. In vain also shall we ape humility in our words, our clothing, our demeanor if the true virtue does not dwell in our heart.

What should we think of a nobleman that, possessing every advantage—talents, riches, the friendship of the king, etc.—should, instead of aiming at the highest po-

* St. Greg., Hom. 9 in Evang.

sition, seek but the good opinion of low officials, should be satisfied to herd with menials at the palace gates? Where could we find words to stigmatize his folly? And is not this a picture of ourselves? Has not our folly cast us into the same pitiable state? We may, if we please and with God's help, rise to the highest dignities in the kingdom of our Father, share His glory, taste His happiness—and yet we prefer to these everlasting goods the applause, the esteem of men as weak, as blind as ourselves. Fatal delusion! Ah! let us beg grace to see it, to put an end to it.

There is no virtue we can more frequently practise than humility. Every instant furnishes occasions for humbling ourselves, either interiorly or exteriorly, either with regard to God, our neighbor, or ourselves. "I know," says St. Paul, "how to be brought low . . . everywhere and in all things." *

Lucifer committed but one sin of pride. And we—how many have we committed? Do we esteem ourselves more guilty than Lucifer?

* Philip. iv. 12.

Humility of heart is prescribed to all without exception. Of what was the whole life of Jesus an example, if not of humility? Upon what does our eternal salvation depend? Listen: "Unless . . . you become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." * Must we not believe from this that for salvation humility is as necessary as baptism?

Do we refer to God alone all the honor and glory of the good that is in us or the good we may do? "To God alone be honor and glory." † In this, St. Paul tells us, consists the difference between the spirit of God and that of the world: "Now we have received not the spirit of this world, but the spirit that is of God: that we may know the things that are given us from God." ‡ He that has the spirit of God acknowledges that whatever he possesses is the gift of God. This knowledge ought not to be sterile in us. It should stir us up to thank our Benefactor, to give Him at least the glory of His own gifts, to testify by this our gratitude toward Him, and humbly to declare

* St. Matt. xviii. 3. † 1 Tim. i. 17. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 12.

that were it not for Him we should on account of our crimes be already in hell: "Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell." *

What means this word of our Lord: "Sit down in the last place," † if not that we should always look upon ourselves as the inferiors of all. He does not tell us to take a middle place, nor even one of the last, but the last place of all. St. Bernard observes that the last place is specified so particularly that, far from preferring ourselves to others, we may not presume even to compare ourselves with others." ‡

St. Thomas says that, without fear of deception, we may always believe our neighbor better than ourselves in the four following points:

First, when we consider in Him the gifts of God; in ourselves, our many sins.

Secondly, when we see in Him some good that we ourselves do not possess.

Thirdly, when we see in ourselves defects from which he is exempt.

Fourthly, when we fear that secret pride

* Ps. xciii. 17. † St. Luke xiv. 10.

‡ St. Bern., Sermon. 29 in Cant.

vitiates whatever little good we may do and renders us guilty in the eyes of God, whilst we are flattering ourselves that we are faithful and virtuous.

“To esteem ourselves vile and miserable, knowing as we do our sins and defects, is but humility of necessity to which truth constrains; but to love to be esteemed vile and miserable is true humility of heart,” says St. Bernard.* And again: “I very much fear lest he whom truth abases should be elated by his own will.”†

If, whilst declaring yourself a sinner, you seek after praise and esteem, “you love vanity and seek after lying.”‡

To commit a sin of pride, it is not necessary to deny that the talents or the goods we possess came from God. That would be a sin of infidelity. But it suffices to glory in our gifts as if they proceeded from ourselves.

He that seeks honor and esteem is in danger of losing his faith: “How can you believe who receive glory one from another.”§ These words made St. Augustine

* St. Bern., Serm. 42 in Cant.

† Ibid.

‡ Ps. iv. 3.

§ St. John v. 44.

say: "He that looks upon the love of praise as a vice is truly wise."*

Jesus says to His Apostles: "'You call Me Master and Lord; and you say well, for so I am'; † you beg Me to instruct you, to make known My law to you, to teach you My will: 'Direct me in Thy truth, and teach me'; ‡ 'Make the way known to me wherein I should walk. Teach me to do Thy will.' § Ah, then, listen! Learn of Me, follow the instructions I now give you: 'Be meek, be humble of heart, as I have been.' ||

"And yet, you do not hearken to My lesson! For fifteen, for twenty years and more I have repeated it to you, and still you forget it, you do not practise it! What folly! Why do you call yourself My disciple? Why do you ask Me to teach you that which you do not care to hear?

"Not alone in words did I give you this instruction. ¶ My actions from My birth to My death most emphatically proclaim the same doctrine. I renew the les-

* St. Augustine, lib. v. *De Civit. Dei*, c. 13.

† St. John xiii. 13. ‡ Ps. xxiv. 5. § Ps. cxlii. 8-10.

|| St. Matt. xi. 29.

¶ St. Bernard.

son daily in the Holy Eucharist. Ah, to what have I not lowered Myself for you! And for how many long ages! Blush at your disobedience! Blush, indocile soul!"

To form some idea of the extent of our dependence upon God, let us fancy to ourselves a man deprived not only of all the necessaries of life, but incapable of moving hand or foot, of opening his eyes, uttering a word, conceiving a thought, or of even drawing a breath unless helped in each act by some compassionate friend. Could such a man have any possible excuse to glory in himself or to expect from others esteem and honor? That poor, helpless creature is a true picture of ourselves when left to ourselves: "Without Me," says our Lord, "you can do nothing."*

When some little occasions of humiliation present themselves, let us regard them as fragments of the True Cross. Let us gather them up carefully, *lest they be lost.*†

* St. John xv. 5.

† St. John vi. 12.

PRAYERS TO OBTAIN HUMILITY.

*A Method to ask this Virtue whilst reciting
the Rosary.*

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is most efficacious to obtain humility. To be genuine, however, it must be animated by unlimited confidence in the intercession of Mary. Her influence over her Divine Son along with her love for us, her adopted children, insures success to the prayers we send up to her. Among these prayers, the Rosary claims the first place.

Let us represent to ourselves a poor man that aims at obtaining some help from his sovereign. What steps does he take? He draws up a petition in which he depicts his needs in the most affecting language. Does he present it himself? No; his inexperience, his poverty, his miserable appearance will, he fears, be no passport to the royal presence. But he knows the gentleness, the compassion, the condescension of the queen, and he ventures to claim her influence with the king. His petition from her hand is graciously received, his prayer granted.

Who will not recognize in the foregoing

picture precisely his own position? The Lord's Prayer is the petition in which all our wants are set forth. But who would say that it has less weight from the hand of the Queen of Heaven than from our own? Might not the Lord reply to sinners such as we, as to the foolish virgins of the Gospel: "I know you not?"* Might He not address to us the words once used toward the wicked servant: "Thou wicked servant."† But with what tenderness will He not receive our petition from His beloved Mother! "My Mother, ask," will he say to her, "for I must not turn away thy face."‡

It is confidence in Mary's powerful intercession that makes us add the Angelical Salutation to the Lord's Prayer in the recitation of the Rosary. "If Mary's compassionate heart was so eager for a miracle in favor of the bride and bridegroom of Cana, who had, however, made her no petition," says St. Bernardin of Siena, § "what will she not do for Christians that invoke her, that offer her reiterated supplications?"

* St. Matt. xxv. 12. †Ib. xviii. 32. ‡3 Kings ii. 20.

§ St. Bernardin, tom. 3, serm. 9.

PARAPHRASE OF THE PATER
NOSTER

TO ASK FOR HUMILITY.

The prayer taught us by our Lord Himself comprises in few words petitions for all the blessings we can desire, but still more particularly does it ask God for true humility.

Our Father.

O my God, I blush to call Thee my Father, because that title recalls to me my enormous ingratitude toward Thee! Ah, yes! Thou art the best of fathers, and I am Thy most ungrateful, miserable child.

Who art in heaven.

O Infinite Majesty, Thou fillest the heavens with Thy glory, and Thy glory does not fill my heart! I am but dust before Thee. Prostrate in Thy sight, I crave Thy mercy.

Hallowed be Thy name!

Ah! my God, only the humble can glorify Thy name. Grant me, then, to become humble. Grant that my daily advancement in humility may give glory to Thy name.

Thy kingdom come !

Thy glorious kingdom will be for ever closed to me if I do not become humble. Oh, grant me humility, which alone can merit Thy grace* and secure to me a place in Thy eternal kingdom !

Thy will be done !

My God, is it not Thy will that I should become meek and humble of heart? Hast Thou not said: "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart"? † Ah, my God, since such is Thy will, let it be perfectly accomplished in me !

On earth as it is in heaven.

My God, with what promptitude, with what fidelity, with what respectful submission the angels accomplish Thy holy will ! Henceforth they shall be my models. May Thy will be done in the earth of my heart as the angels fulfil it in heaven !

Give us this day our daily bread !

My God, how sweet to owe all to Thee ! I ask Thee not for riches, I do not aspire to those extraordinary gifts Thou dost

* St. James iv. 6.

† St. Matt. xi. 29.

grant to Thy chosen souls. Give me in my extreme poverty only those graces that I need for each day. Grant me the robe of humility, that I may present myself before Thee as the miserable beggar that I am.

Forgive us our trespasses!

Mercy, my Jesus, mercy for all my sins, and especially for those of pride! Grant that henceforth my humility may equal my former pride, which I now detest before Thee.

As we forgive them that trespass against us!

If not blinded by pride, never would I have dared to avenge myself or even complain of wrongs and injuries. Having sinned against Thy Majesty, I deserved to suffer infinitely more than I have done. From my heart I pardon all that have ever offended me. In Thy mercy, dear God, blot out all my sins.

And lead us not into temptation!

The most fatal temptation that has ever assailed me is that against humility. O great God, have pity on my weakness; fill my soul with sentiments of the deepest humility!

But deliver us from evil!

O Jesus, Thou didst command the infernal spirits and they became obedient to Thy voice. "With authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they go out."* Exert in my behalf Thy sovereign power and banish for ever from my heart the spirit of pride that has so long held possession of it.

Amen!

May humility animate my prayer to Thee, O God, that Thou mayest deign to bless it! O Sovereign Truth, in asking for humility I ask for the love of truth. Humility is truth. Henceforth honor and glory to Thee to whom they belong,† shame and confusion to me so deserving of the same.‡

* St. Luke iv. 36. † 1 Tim. i. 17. ‡ Dan. ix. 7.

PARAPHRASE OF THE AVE MARIA
TO ASK FOR HUMILITY.

Hail, Mary!

Reverently, O Mary, do I salute thee whom the August Trinity chose to repair, by humility and obedience, the evils occasioned by the pride and disobedience of our first mother.

Full of grace!

O Mary, thy humility surpassed that of angels and saints! The fulness of thy grace flows from thy humility, and, like it, excels that of all others!

The Lord is with thee!

O Mary, thou art truly the temple of the three Divine Persons! But God the Son, who annihilated Himself for love of us, is with thee in an especial manner.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus!

O Mary, most blessed of women, because the most humble,* thy humility raised thee to the dignity of Mother of God.

* St. Bernard.

*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us
sinners!*

O Mary, pray for us poor sinners! Pray that we may be delivered from pride, the source of sin.

Now and at the hour of our death!

O Mary, full of pity, obtain for us humility, now, now at this moment, and keep us in it till the hour of death!

Amen!

O Mary, be it as we have asked! Obtain for us holy humility!

THE ROSARY MEDITATED TO GAIN HUMILITY.*

THE FIVE JOYFUL MYSTERIES.

First Mystery.—The Annunciation.

This mystery breathes but of humiliation. Gabriel humbles himself before Mary; Mary abases herself before God; the Divine Word annihilates Himself in taking our nature.

I thank thee, O Mary, for the example of humility thou gavest me in declaring thyself the handmaid of the Lord at the very instant in which thou didst become His mother! Obtain for me the grace to imitate in some degree the wonders of humility I here find.

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

* The bulls of several Pontiffs prescribe meditation upon the mysteries as a condition for gaining the indulgence attached to the Rosary. But Benedict XIII. declares in his bull that the uninstructed and they that are unaccustomed to meditation may gain the indulgence by reciting the Rosary with *piety and devotion*, provided they keep their thoughts, as far as they can, upon the different mysteries.

Second Mystery.—The Visitation.

How humbled is St. Elizabeth when she beholds the Mother of God entering her house! But how much greater the humility of Mary who, despite her sublime prerogatives, has come so far to console her aged cousin!

O Mary, what may I not hope for from thy charity! If upon earth thou wast so compassionate, thou canst not now in the home of love cast off the prayer of the sinner crying to thee! O model of humble souls, obtain for me the grace to imitate thee!

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

Third Mystery.—The Nativity.

Jesus is born in a stable. He is laid upon straw between two brute beasts. Mary adores Him in His annihilation and shares His poverty.

O Mary, what dare I here ask excepting the love of humiliation! Obtain for me this grace. I unite myself to thee and thy dear Son.

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

Fourth Mystery.—The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

In the eyes of all Jerusalem, Mary was a mother like other mothers. She, who in the eyes of God shone with the splendor of purity, unequalled before or since, presents herself for purification!

Jesus is offered to His Father, the most High God, and redeemed as a sinner with two turtle-doves!

Oh! how often have I not wished to pass for what I am not! O Mary, obtain for me of the Father the grace to abase myself after the example of His Son!

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be the Father, etc.

Fifth Mystery.—The finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple.

O the grief and humiliation of Mary's soul during those three bitter days of separation from Jesus!

O Holy Mother, it is I that ought to be grieved and humbled for having so often lost thy dear Son by my sins! Obtain for me true sorrow for the same!

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

THE FIVE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES.

First Mystery.—The Agony in the Garden.

Jesus falls, His face to the earth. The anguish of His Sacred Heart forces the bloody sweat from every pore. What abasement! What humiliation!

O Mary, my sins were the cause of thy Son's agony! Obtain for me a sorrow so lasting that it may keep me always profoundly humble!

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

Second Mystery.—Jesus scourged.

O the confusion of the Lamb of God on being stripped of His garments in the midst of the vile rabble, on being condemned to a punishment reserved for slaves only! O what patience under those cruel lashes! See His sacred body covered with wounds!

O Mary, my cowardice suffers me not to

endure such pains as those of thy dear Son! Ah! obtain for me, at least, a portion of the admirable humility that shone forth in the midst of His sufferings.

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

Third Mystery.—Jesus crowned.

Ah, here indeed is Jesus the King of the humble! Thorns for a crown, a reed for a sceptre, the spittle of insolent slaves defiling His sacred face, blindfolded, covered with blows, and commanded to prophesy—my soul, behold thy Saviour-God! . . . Ah, Lord, cast me not off, guilty though I be! Cast me not off, lest I become more infamous than Barabbas or Judas. Thou dost offer these outrages to expiate my excesses.

O Mary, help me to live in humility, my proper state, thus to make some little indemnification for what my sins have caused thy dear Son!

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

Fourth Mystery.—Jesus carries His Cross. Look at Jesus traversing Jerusalem laden

with the infamous cross upon which He was soon to die! O what confusion! what ignominy!

O Mary, it is only by suffering that I can be saved! Obtain for me to endure all that may fall to my share with dispositions like unto those of thy Divine Son! Obtain for me, above all, the spirit of humility!

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

Fifth Mystery.—Jesus crucified.

Does not the example of Jesus in His ignominious passion confound and instruct us? Was not the God-Saviour humbled enough before Caiphas, Herod, and Pilate in the streets and public places of Jerusalem? Must He now be nailed to a gibbet and exposed to the jeers of the multitude?

O God, Thy people were terrified when, amid thunders and lightning, Thou didst proclaim Thy Law from Sinai's height. Ah, what should be our consternation at seeing Thee publish from the summit of Calvary Thy holy law of humility!

Lord Jesus! either cease to speak to me* or convert me at once! Shatter my pride as Thou didst the rock of Calvary, and make me docile to Thy voice.

O Mary, thou didst faithfully lay up in thy heart † all God's words to thee! Obtain that, at no instant of my life, I may forget what thy dear Son teaches me, *what He cries out to me* in this mystery. ‡

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

THE FIVE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES.

First Mystery.—The Resurrection.

Oh the joy of Mary on seeing her Son resuscitated! on seeing the brilliancy that clothed Him! Where were now His sufferings and humiliations? Changed into untold glory!

O Mary, I am unworthy to share in thy joy, but let me bear with thee thy Son's humiliations! This grace I beg thee to ask of God for me.

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

* Exod. xx. 19.

† St. Luke ii. 19.

‡ St. Matt. xxvii. 50.

Second Mystery.—The Ascension.

Mary is ravished on seeing her Son mounting to heaven. She sees the portals of that blessed abode opening to receive Him, she sees Him entering in triumph! Ah! she knows full well that He owes this happiness to the humiliations with which He was drenched so short a time ago.*

O Mary, since by the goodness of God I am called to the glory that thy Son now enjoys, obtain for me never to stray from the only path that conducts thereto, the path of true humility.

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

Third Mystery.—The Descent of the Holy Ghost.

Since Mary is the most humble of creatures, she shares most abundantly in the gifts and fruits of the Holy Ghost. After her Divine Son, she can most truly say: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me."† Yes, truly, the Spirit of light "hath had regard to the humility of His handmaid."‡

* St. Luke xxiv. 46. † Ib. iv. 18. ‡ Ib. i. 48.

O Mary, since it was whilst in prayer with the Apostles and for the Apostles* that thou didst receive the plenitude of the Holy Ghost, invoke for me that Spirit-Creator. Obtain that He may come and fill my heart to the exclusion of every thought of pride!† May He create in me a new spirit,‡ the spirit of truth and humility of which He is the ineffable Source!

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*).
Glory be to the Father, etc.

Fourth Mystery.—The Assumption of Our Lady.

Earth is no longer worthy of Mary. Heaven longs to possess her. The Cherubim receive her; they bear her up on their wings. Behold, she flies into the arms of her Son!§

O Mary, turn thine eyes of mercy toward me! Oh, show thyself a mother, || and present to thy Son the promise I here make to become like unto Him in His

* Acts i. 14. † Ib. ii. 4. ‡ Ps. l. 12.

§ Ps. xvii. 11. || Hymn eccles.

humiliations, that I may be one day like unto Him in glory!

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

Fifth Mystery. — The Coronation of Mary.

Upon the highest and most magnificent throne in the heavenly kingdom, next after that of Jesus, sits Mary the Sovereign Queen. O Mary, thy Father, thy Son, thy Spouse crown thee! What can a poor creature add to such happiness as thine? O thou whose power is so great, obtain for me humility! It is the greatest grace I ask of thee!

Our Father. Hail Mary (*ten times*). Glory be to the Father, etc.

LITANY OF HUMILITY.

TAKEN FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

O Jesus, humble of Heart, *hear my prayer !*O Jesus, humble of Heart, *hear my prayer !*O Jesus, humble of Heart, *grant me humility ! **

1. Jesus, truly a hidden God,
2. Jesus, laid in a manger,
3. Jesus, offered to the Lord and re-
deemed with two doves,
4. Jesus, borne into Egypt,
5. Jesus, baptized by John,
6. Jesus, taken up by the devil and
placed on the pinnacle of the
Temple,
7. Jesus, taken up by the devil upon
a high mountain,
8. Jesus, by many reputed mad,
9. Jesus, by even some of Thy friends
regarded as insane,
10. Jesus, thought to be possessed of
a devil,

Grant me humility !

* The passages of Holy Scripture from which these invocations are drawn may be found with corresponding numbers at the end of the Litany.

11. Jesus, who didst take the form of
a servant,
12. Jesus, who didst wash the dis-
ciples' feet,
13. Jesus, the bread of life,
14. Jesus, concealed in the Eucharist.
15. Jesus, abandoned by Thy disci-
ples,
16. Jesus, despised by Herod and his
army,
17. Jesus, whose face was spat upon,
18. Jesus, struck in the face,
19. Jesus, crowned with thorns,
20. Jesus, mocked with the words:
Hail, King of the Jews!
21. Jesus, blindfolded and mocked,
22. Jesus, most shamefully scourged,
23. Jesus, exhibited to the people,
24. Jesus, the last of men,
25. Jesus, the refuse of the people,
26. Jesus, the opprobrium of men,
27. Jesus, object of the divine anger,
28. Jesus, humbled by God,
29. Jesus, a worm and no man,
30. Jesus, in whom there was neither
beauty nor comeliness,
31. Jesus, in appearance a leper,

Grant me humility!

32. Jesus, crucified,
33. Jesus, crucified between two thieves,
34. Jesus, reputed with the wicked,
35. Jesus, blasphemed and mocked by the passers-by,
36. Jesus, obedient unto death,
37. Jesus, obedient to the death of the cross,
38. Jesus, who didst debase and humble Thyself,
39. Jesus, drenched with opprobrium,
40. Jesus, who didst cry out with a loud voice: My God, my God, why hast thou abandoned me?

Grant me humility!

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *pardon my sins of pride!*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *destroy my pride that my prayers may be heard!*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *have pity on me and make me truly humble of heart!*

O Jesus, *hear my prayer!*

O Jesus, *grant my prayer!*

LET US PRAY.

O Jesus, who didst suffer so much to leave us a perfect model of humility, and who didst command us to learn of Thee that Thou wast meek and humble of heart, make me docile to Thy lessons and faithful to their practice! By Thy humiliations, by Thy infinite love, which led Thee to endure them, and by the glory that now crowns them, I beseech Thee to grant me humility, O Thou that livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, world without end! Amen!

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Jesus, humble of heart.—St. Matt. xi. 29.

1. Verily, thou art a hidden God.—Isai. xlv. 15.

2. And laid him in a manger.—St. Luke ii. 7.

3. They carried him to present him to the Lord . . . and to offer a sacrifice . . . a pair of turtle doves.—St. Luke ii. 22, 24.

4. Joseph . . . took the child . . . and retired into Egypt.—St. Matt. ii. 14.

5. Jesus came . . . to be baptized by John.—St. Mark i. 9.

6. The devil took him up . . . and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple.—St. Matt. iv. 5.

7. Again the devil took him up into a very high mountain.—St. Matt. iv. 8.

8. But many of them said : He is mad.—St. John x. 20.

9. They said : He is become mad.—St. Mark iii. 21.

10. He hath a devil.—St. John x. 20.

11. Taking the form of a servant.—Philip. ii. 7.

12. And began to wash the feet of the disciples.—St. John xiii. 5.

13. I am the bread of life.—St. John vi. 35.

14. Take ye, and eat : this is my body.—St. Matt. xxvi. 26.

15. The disciples all leaving him, fled.—St. Matt. xxvi. 56.

16. And Herod and his army set him at naught.—St. Luke xxiii. 11.

17. Then did they spit in his face.—St. Matt. xxvi. 67.

18. And others struck him with the palms of their hands.—St. Matt. xxvi. 67.

19. And plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head.—St. Matt. xxvii. 29.

20. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: Hail, king of the Jews.—St. Matt. xxvii. 29.

21. And his look as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not.—Isai. liii. 3.

And they blindfolded him, and smote his face: and they asked him, saying: Prophecy who is it that struck thee.—St. Luke xxii. 64.

22. Pilate took Jesus and scourged him.—St. John xix. 1.

23. Jesus therefore came forth bearing the crown of thorns, and the purple garment . . . and Pilate said: Behold the Man!—St. John xix. 5.

24. The most abject of men.—Isai. liii. 3.

25. The outcast of the people.—Ps. xxi. 7.

26. The reproach of men.—Ps. xxi. 7.

27. As one struck by God.—Isai. liii. 4.

28. Afflicted by God.—Isai. liii. 4.

29. But I am a worm and no man.—Ps. xxi. 7.

30. There is no beauty in him nor comeliness.—Isai. liii. 2.

31. We have thought him as it were a leper.—Isai. liii. 4.

32. They crucified him.—St. John xix. 18.

33. Then were crucified with him two thieves.—St. Matt. xxvii. 38.

34. And was reputed with the wicked.—Isai. liii. 12.

35. And they that passed by blasphemed him wagging their heads.—St. Matt. xxvii. 39.

36. He became obedient unto death.—Philip. ii. 8.

37. Even to the death of the cross.—Philip. ii. 8.

38. He humbled himself.—Philip. ii. 8.

39. He shall be filled with reproaches.—Lament. iii. 30.

40. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And Jesus, crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.—St. Matt. xxvii. 46, 50.

41. Behold the Lamb of God . . . who taketh away the sin of the world.—St. John i. 29.

To God alone be honor and glory!

HUMILITY ILLUSTRATED.

Longum iter est per præcepta breve et efficax per exempla.—The way is long by precept, short and easy by example.

Convinced of the truth of this maxim, we have thought a few examples gathered at random, and which breathe of the virtue treated in the foregoing pages, would not be out of place. Rather will they be a fitting conclusion to what has hitherto been said on the subject and may, perhaps, prove a more powerful incentive to its practice than any argument yet advanced. If in them is found much beyond our imitation they will at least furnish ample matter for admiration.

In W—— lived a zealous, devoted priest. Early and late, in sunshine and storm, was Father O—— to be found at his post. No undertaking for the glory of God that did not find ready support from him; no sorrow confided to him that did not meet with active sympathy in his big heart, and no one of his numerous parishioners that called not Father O—— his father and friend. Time went on and the bishop of

the diocese was succeeded by a stranger. Now was the moment to try the good priest as gold is tried in the crucible, and Almighty God permitted that he should be calumniated and misrepresented to the new incumbent. Father O—— did what he judged lawful to defend his good name, but the bishop would receive no explanation. The priest was deprived of his faculties. He left the diocese, obtained a situation in one of the large cities, and there began a life of entire seclusion and devotedness. Every morning saw him assisting at the Holy Sacrifice at which he daily partook of the Bread of Life. For fifteen years he lived in this way, faithful to his conscience and his God, bravely carrying his cross and enduring many painful privations. Meanwhile the prelate under whom these events had taken place passed to his own account, and was in turn succeeded by another. God put it into the heart of one of the oldest priests of the diocese to lay Father O——'s case before the new bishop. The affair was then thoroughly sifted, the injustice discovered, and the patient follower of his Lord restored with honor to the rights and privileges of the

priestly dignity. Hearts that had never ceased to love and revere Father O—— welcomed his return with enthusiasm, whilst with regret they marked the sad change wrought by those sorrowful years in the once active and vigorous priest. Soon after the resumption of his clerical duties he preached a soul-stirring sermon on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. His burning words moved his hearers to tears, and all understood whence the eloquent preacher and brave confessor of Christ had drawn the strength to suffer and be silent under the heavy cross so lately removed.

Somewhat similar to the preceding example is that of another holy young priest, who began his career in one of the little villages of France. Among his parishioners were a mother and a daughter, both possessed by the spirit of Satan. It had long been their mutual desire to ruin a priest of God in some way or other. Now, they thought, was the time to practise the diabolical arts that they had tried in vain upon others. Father Leboir, as we shall call him, was young and inexperienced. He would easily fall into the

snare. For a long time previously the daughter was in the habit of swallowing chicken's blood and casting it forth again, with all the appearances of a violent hemorrhage. Practice enabled her to perfect the deception, as also to retain the blood for a longer or a shorter period at pleasure. The two emissaries of Satan laid their plan, and the daughter sought the young priest's confessional one evening about dusk. Timing her turn so as to be the last of his penitents she entered, made her confession so-called, and left the box. The few devout adorers had withdrawn one by one, and the confessor and his penitent were alone. Now was the demon's time. Hardly had the young priest taken a few steps up the aisle toward the sacristy when he was startled by a heavy fall. Turning, he beheld the young girl whom he had just left stretched at full length a few paces off. He hurried back to her assistance and reached her just in time to behold a copious stream of blood flowing from her mouth. To run for help and have the sufferer conveyed to the housekeeper's apartments was the work of a moment. The doctor was sent for. He declared the case

precarious, forbade the patient to be moved for several days, and so matters stood. Meanwhile the mother was summoned. Her appearance was the signal for the sequel to the story. Both mother and daughter united in branding the innocent young priest with the foulest intentions. Father Leboir listened in horror to the calumny forged against him. In vain did he proclaim his innocence, in vain repeat his version of the affair. He was unable to produce witnesses and his word was not received. He was tried before a court of justice, declared guilty, and condemned to an imprisonment of three months. The young priest accepted the sentence in silence, inwardly committing his cause to God. In the solitude of his prison-cell he prayed, recited his breviary, read and wrote. A few weeks had scarcely elapsed, when the miserable girl, whose diabolical scheme had so well succeeded, fell suddenly and seriously ill. No remedy could relieve the fierce torments that racked her, and the physician declared that she must die. Terror-stricken at the thought of death and the fearful crime so lately committed, she cried for a confessor, and in presence of all

around her made a public confession of her guilt. It is needless to add that Father Leboir, the object of her satanic wiles, was at once liberated. The whole village turned out to escort him with every mark of honor from the prison to his own home. The rejoicing was general and unfeigned, tears flowed from eyes that seldom wept, and in the hearty sympathy of his little flock, the good young priest found ample indemnification for the humiliations of the past. True it is that Almighty God will never abandon them who cast all their care upon Him.

A certain very pious and charitable young lady had received from her confessor rules for the distribution of her alms. Events transpired which led her to change her director. The first, seeing that she no longer obeyed his directions in her various works of charity, publicly refused her Communion one morning when she presented herself to receive at his Mass. He may have done this through a spirit of zeal, or perhaps to try her humility. Whatever the cause of a refusal so extraordinary, the confusion it entailed upon the young girl did not disturb her peace. Feeling only

the privation of not receiving her Beloved, she prolonged her preparation for His coming until the end of Mass. Then following the priest into the sacristy, she begged him so humbly and earnestly to give her Holy Communion that, quite overcome by her humility, he returned to the altar and gave her Him for whom her soul longed. The witnesses of this scene looked on surprised and edified.

In one of our largest cities the Jesuit Fathers had formed a Sodality in honor of the Blessed Virgin. It increased so rapidly in numbers that its weekly meetings almost filled the good-sized church. Among its officers was one very conspicuous for his piety and gentlemanly behavior; indeed, his deference and politeness toward others were proverbial. It so happened that the Father Director was changed, and the entrance of a strange Father upon the duties devolving upon that charge was the signal for some envious individual to misrepresent the young man to the new Director. Improbable as it may seem, the point upon which he was attacked was the very one in

which he would be least likely to offend : namely, respect to superior officers. The tale was so plausible that the Father, unacquainted with the parties, easily believed it. Next Sunday, when the Sodality was convened and the young man in his accustomed place, the Director appeared in the sanctuary in surplice and stole. After a few remarks, very mortifying to the object of them, he ordered him to take off his badge and remove to a seat back, and far away from the other members. This was his punishment and was to last as long as the Father Director should deem proper. Quietly, silently, and respectfully the young man arose, removed his badge, and bowing low to the Father Director, as if in acceptance of a well-merited punishment, withdrew to the seat assigned him. Many glances were turned toward him, but none could detect the slightest expression of resentment or wounded feeling. Weeks passed, and every meeting found the young man present, but still in punishment. The Father Director, surprised at submission so perfect, at humility-proof against so public a trial, at last investigated the matter more closely, discov-

ered the calumny, and made full and honorable amends to the noble young sodalist who so willingly drank from the chalice of his Lord.

During the episcopal visitation prescribed by the Church for religious communities many unjust complaints were lodged against the Superioress of a certain house. The visitor reproached her severely, citing one after another the various charges against her. The Superioress listened in silence; no reply, no excuse, no murmur escaped her lips. That evening she said in confidence to one of her subjects: "Many depositions were made against me to-day. Now I must be on the lookout for an opportunity to oblige those that have done me this service."

The following example of unmerited disgrace is worthy of record: A false report was made to the Ecclesiastical Superior of a certain convent. He was told that the Superioress had refused to obey some of his directions. Irritated at the news, and neglecting to inquire into its truth, he sent an order to the community to depose the

Superioress and to appoint another provisionally. The deposed Superioress also received directions to meddle in none of the affairs of the house and not to presume to go to the parlor. All was done as directed, to the great sorrow of the community at large who dearly loved their good Mother. Mother M——, as we may call her, knew not wherein she had offended, but she gladly obeyed, longing for no higher good in life than the solitude of her own little cell. When the Sisters expressed to her their grief she replied: "What have we to fear? God has permitted this trial. He will see to it." Another Sister exercised the office of Superioress, and the deposed Mother edified all by her patience, humility and gayety. Her confidence in God was soon rewarded. A few weeks flew by, and one day a person of distinction presented himself at the door to see the former Superioress. Finding from the acting Superioress how matters stood, he interested himself in the affair, found that the good Mother had been misrepresented, and procured her reinstatement in her charge. She resumed her duties to the

great joy of her subjects. God had indeed "seen to it." He ordained that honor should follow disgrace, for the Holy Father himself deigned to express to Mother M—— his sympathy.

A certain famous missionary went to give the "Exercises" in a town that had seldom been visited for such a purpose. The Father preached early and late, and had the consolation to know that much of the seed he scattered had fallen on good soil. In one of his sermons he spoke in powerful language against a certain evil very prevalent in the place. Among his hearers was a man to whom the preacher's words very especially applied, and in his wicked heart he resolved to have his revenge the first chance that offered. Not many days after he met the Father on one of the most frequented streets. Now was his time, and he made use of it. Striding up to the Father with rage in his countenance, he gave him a fierce blow on the cheek. The fellow made a narrow escape from the indignant crowd that soon assembled, but the priest, like the Apostles of old, rejoiced in his heart

at having been found worthy to suffer something for Christ's sake.

In a country parish lived a convert to the Church, who had long distinguished himself among the other parishioners for his zeal and earnestness in everything appertaining to the cause of religion. The priest of the parish often employed good Mr. N—— and intrusted to him many little charges to which his own pressing duties sometimes rendered it impossible for him to attend in person. Among these was the conducting of the Rosary on certain occasions. Now, there is never wanting some cross-grained individuals to rise up in condemnation of any arrangement not emanating from themselves, or of which they are not the distinguished objects. And so, that Mr. N—— should be the recipient of such marks of confidence from the pastor was highly distasteful to many. Mr. N—— was a carpenter by trade, and was at the time of which we speak engaged in constructing a fence around some of the church property. One Sunday, whilst all the good folk were at church, one of

these malevolent spirits wrote on the fence in huge white characters: "Jacob N—, Bishop of H—l," and then turned the board in, that no chance might deprive the good man of the pleasure his new dignity must surely inspire. Monday morning came and with it returned old N— to his work. The first thing that met his glance was the opprobrious writing. Just at that moment the pastor made his appearance. N— pointed to the board. "Oh! oh!" cried the priest. "Why, Jacob, you have a fine title there." The good old man shrugged his shoulders, turned to his work with a smile, and that was all the notice the insult received.

It is related of Father Alexander de Meo, of the congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, that humility served as a counterpoise to his great learning. He reckoned himself as nothing in God's creation, the last and least of all his brethren. When not engaged in the Missions he shut himself up in his own room, desiring to live forgotten by all. If some distinguished prelate visited the house,

Father de Meo hid himself, and, if obliged in obedience to come forward, he sat so silent and recollected that a stranger might have thought him unable to converse on any topic. To receive a Bishop's blessing was not an empty formality for the humble Father. He performed this act with humility so sincere that it appeared even upon his exterior. He was once accused of carrying his deference too far on some occasions. "We ought to humble ourselves at such times," said Father de Meo, "for then God blesses our labors."

Another holy Redemptorist was Father Paul Cafaro. He esteemed humility as the apple of his eye. It was the ordinary subject of his meditation, and he constantly made use of this prayer: "*Domine, humilem fieri, igne flagrari, in sanctum cito converti, pati, et contemni pro te*—Lord, grant that I may become humble, that I may burn with the fire of Thy love, that I may quickly become a saint, and that I may suffer and be despised for Thee." These last words: "*That I may suffer and be despised for Thee,*" he repeated over and over

with heartfelt earnestness. Once he unconsciously revealed the secret desire of his heart in the following words: "If I had been unjustly accused of the greatest crimes, degraded and punished in the market-place, then I should have done something for God!" One day some one said to him: "Father, you are a saint." Blushing for shame, Father Cafaro replied warmly: "A saint! *What* a saint!"

A Protestant lady lay on her death-bed. She called for a Catholic priest. Her Protestant relatives hooted at her request, but a good Catholic servant-girl resolved to do what she could to gratify the dying lady. She went to the pastor of the Catholic church and acquainted him with the circumstance. He went at once, but was refused admittance. Three times he returned, hoping each time to meet a more gracious reception, but in vain. He was dismissed with insulting remarks. On account of his florid complexion, they even told him that he looked more like an inebriate than a respectable man. Nothing daunted, and remembering that Jesus Christ had been called a wine-

bibber, the priest made known his embarrassment to one of his fellow-priests. The latter replied: "Leave it to me. I'll manage it so that you shall be admitted, and see the sick lady alone, too." This was one of the grounds on which the Protestant relatives based their refusal to allow him entrance: namely, that he insisted upon seeing the dying lady alone. Off they started, Father A—— not knowing how Father B—— intended to make good his promise. On reaching the house they rang the bell, introduced themselves as Catholic priests, and were ushered into the parlor, where they found several members of the family. These latter were confounded at the pertinacity of Father A——, and repeated their refusal to let him visit the invalid. "Come, come," said Father B——, "do not all here believe in the Bible?" "Certainly we do," was the prompt reply. "Well, then," rejoined Father B——, "bring me your Bible and I shall prove to you that my friend is only insisting upon doing what the Bible commands him." The Bible was produced, laid solemnly on the centre-table, and all gathered around curious to hear what the

Catholic priest had to say. "Now's your time," said Father B—— to his companion, as he gravely turned the leaves of the huge family Bible. "Now go and do what you have to do." Strange as it may appear, no opposition was offered to Father A.'s withdrawal. The interest of all seemed to be suddenly chained to the scene before them, and they hardly noticed Father A.'s exit from the room. Suffice it to say that the lady received all the Sacraments whilst Father B—— kept her relatives engaged down-stairs. She died that night. Not long after the most violent opposers of the good priest's entrance went of their own accord, received instructions, and abjured their errors. So does the patient acceptance of humiliations for God's sake draw down blessings upon every work.

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